

Saipan Tribune

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INSIDE



Zero Buoyancy

A Department of Public Safety boat capsized at the Smiling Cove marina late Monday afternoon, prompting the agency's own personnel and other response teams to proceed to the site. No oil leak from the police boat was found.

Page 4



Strong Finish

Generous consumer incentives and an improving economy appear to be lifting sales of new cars and trucks to one of the highest levels of the year in December, analysts say.

Page 13



Big Intrusions

This is the year the Internet officially stopped being fun. The festering problems of spam, spyware, viruses, worms and pop-ups boiled over, making the online experience merely annoying at best, financially and emotionally destructive at worst.

Page 33

CPA paints rosy picture for 2004

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority is confident that 2004 will be fruitful for the tourism industry, with the good showing of incoming passenger haul in the last part of 2003 expected to continue in this Year of the Monkey.

CPA executive director Carlos H. Salas was first to make public his "fearless forecast" about the state of the local travel sector, basing his rosy projection on the steady climb of arrival figures in the last months.

"The year 2004 is going to be better than last year but we are still trying to keep our expenses down to help us cushion the adverse financial impacts of the decline in the past year," Salas said in an interview.

He also noted that the additional flights dispatched by Northwest, Continental, Japan, and Asiana Airlines between Saipan and major Asian cities—Tokyo, Nagoya, Pusan, and Manila—are most likely to push tourist traffic to the Northern Marianas at a higher level—compared to the 2003 tally, at least.

Northwest's daily nonstop flights

between Saipan and Nagoya, Japan, which was launched on Oct. 26, 2003, will bring in additional 182 passengers each day, Salas said.

On the other hand, he mentioned that Continental Airlines' Manila-Saipan direct flights, which began on Dec. 9, 2003, will bring in an estimated 1,240 passengers in a month. Continental flies twice each week between the Philippine capital city and Saipan.

Also this year, Asiana Airlines resumed its Pusan-Saipan flights, with the service stretching from Dec. 25, 2003 to Jan. 25, 2004. This additional

See CPA on Page 8



Salas

Taekwang, CUC to resume desalination project talks

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

As far as Taekwang Heavy Industries and the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation are concerned, the desalination project on Saipan is very much alive despite a recent recommendation from the Office of the Public Auditor for its cancellation.

Taekwang vice chairman and marketing president Ed M. Guerrero, in a press briefing on Dec. 31, said his office just received a new notice from the CUC for the resumption of project presentation.

"We've got another notice for presentation but we're told that it's just for presentation, not negotiation due to unresolved issues," Guerrero told

See TAEKWANG on Page 8



LIBERTY DONES

Taekwang Heavy Industries executives hold a press briefing Wednesday to explain its side in the much-criticized desalination project that is being pushed by the CUC. From right: former Judge Ed Manibusan, Taekwang executive director Choong Rae Kim, vice chair and marketing chief Ed Guerrero, consultant Manny Sablan, and Byung Hae Min.

House allows 65 more FTEs for CHC

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

What the House of Representatives failed to do last Tuesday they finally managed last Wednesday: approving the joint resolution that would increase the Commonwealth Health Center's slots—or FTE's—for nurses by an additional 65.

House Joint Resolution 13-036

finally secured a super-majority vote of 15, with only one dissenting, Rep. Stanley Torres. Reps. Oscar M. Babauta and Normal Palacios were absent and excused during the session.

The measure now goes to the Senate for similar passage but as of early afternoon Wednesday, there was no word from Senate President Paul A. Mangiona if he is going to call for a session to tackle the measure.

The lower chamber had rushed the passage of the joint resolution due to the Dec. 31 deadline that signaled the shift in CHC's hiring practice for nurses from manpower agencies to direct hire.

Like Tuesday's session, though, the passage of HJR 13-036 did not happen without first going through a lengthy discussion that included summoning Attorney General Pamela Brown to the

See HOUSE on Page 8

A resolute approach to a happier New Year

By DON OLDENBURG
THE WASHINGTON POST

Lose weight, get into shape and quit smoking—those are perennial top 10 commitments on New Year's resolution lists. But for consumers, financial overindulgences and marketplace regrets are as common as

See A RESOLUTE on Page 8



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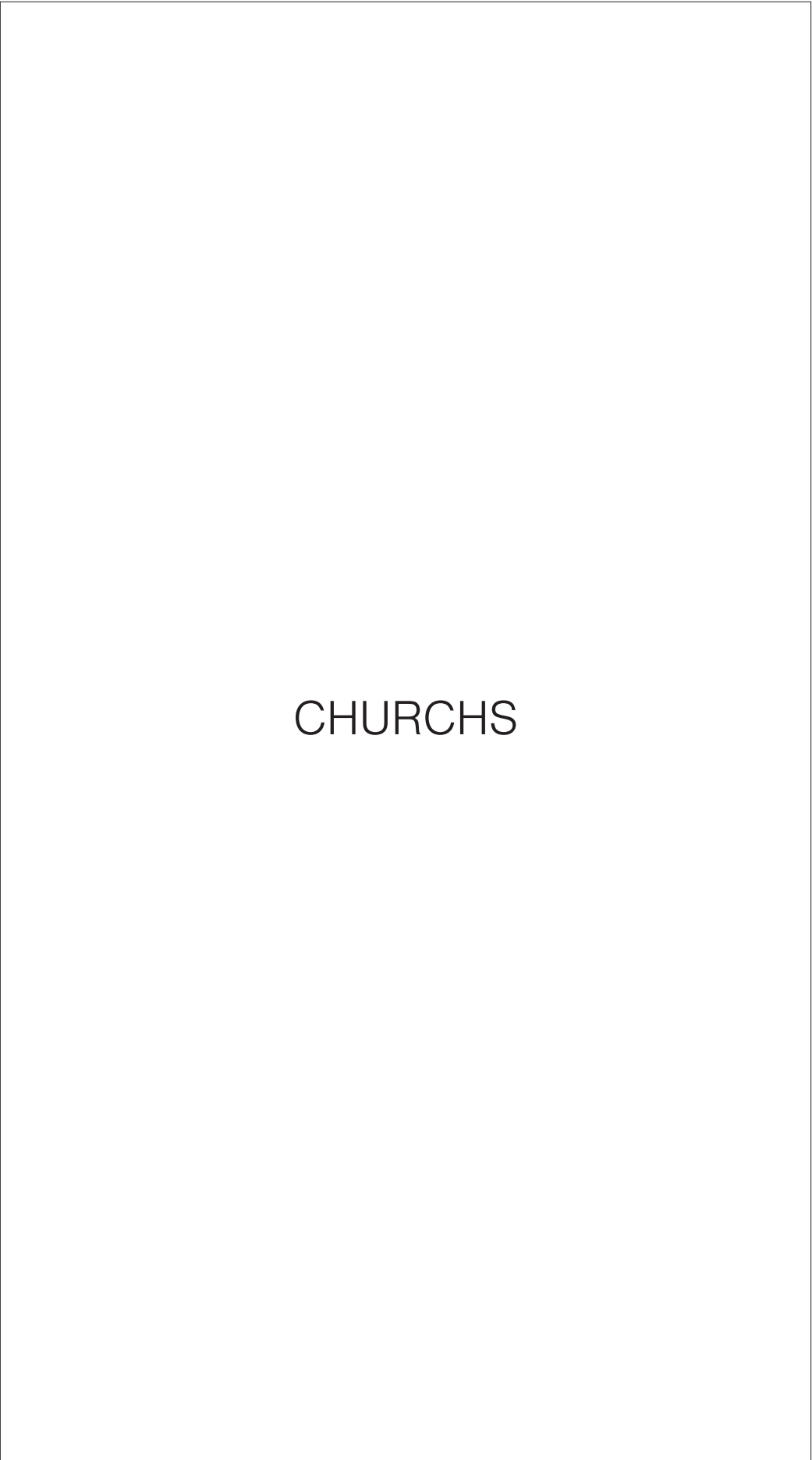
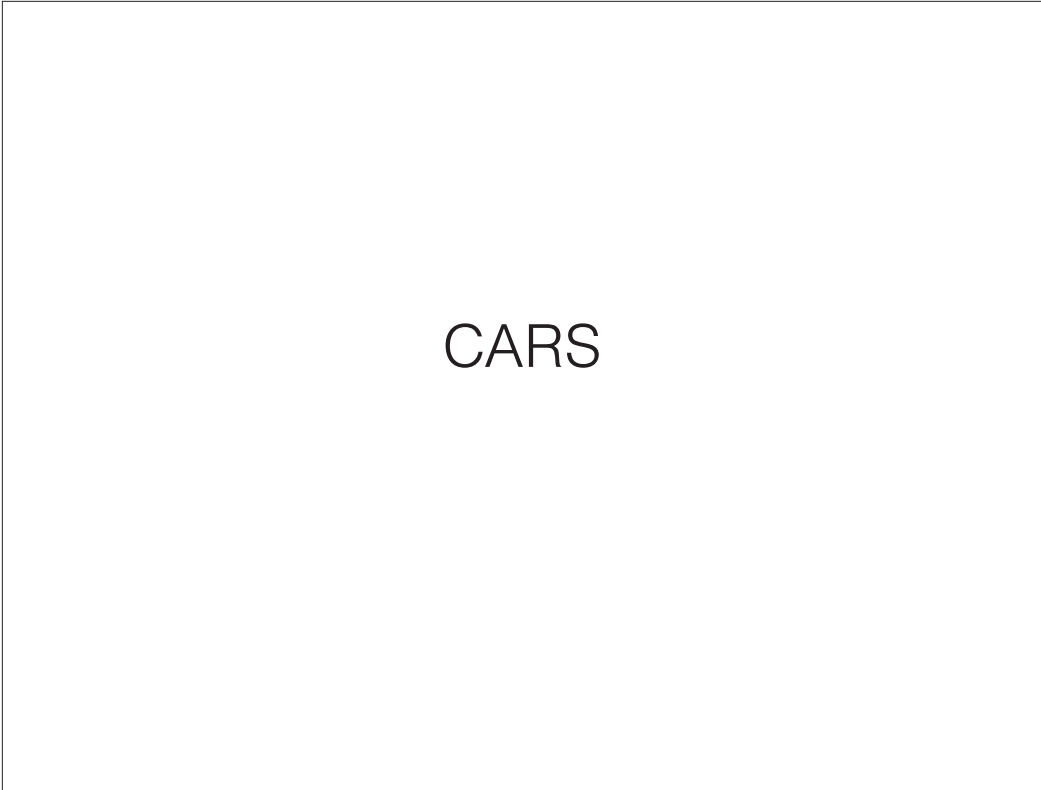
Gifts on wheels.
Just in time for the holidays.

2004 MODELS NOW AVAILABLE

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NISSAN Ford HONDA KIA

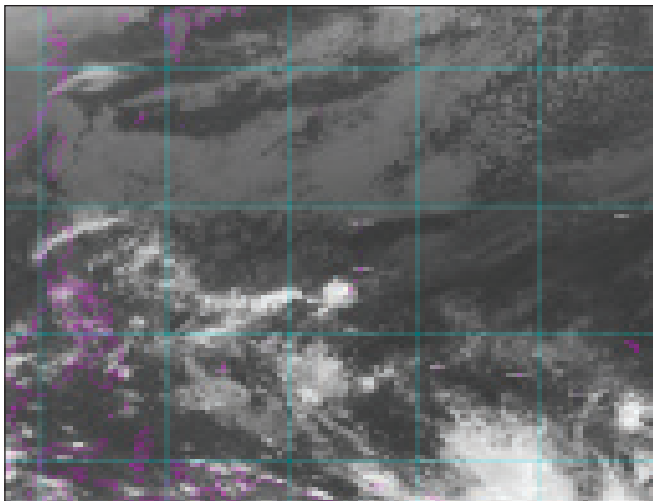
Local



FLIGHT SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE NOV. 7, 2003									
DEPARTURES					ARRIVALS				
Saipan-Guam					Guam-Saipan				
CO 948	6:15am	6:55am	Daily		CO 941	7:15am	8:00am	Daily	
NW 3821	6:45am	7:30am	Daily		CO 910	7:15am	8:00am	2,6	
NW 3825	4:30pm	5:20pm	1-6		NW 3850	8:00am	8:30am	Daily	
NW 3803	4:15pm	5:30pm	Daily		NW 3828	1:30pm	2:20pm	Daily	
CO 942	6:30pm	6:40pm	Daily		CO 943	4:40pm	5:25pm	Daily	
CO 944	6:10pm	6:30pm	2,3,4,6,7		NW 3856	5:45pm	7:30pm	Daily	
CO 909	6:10pm	6:30pm	1,5		NW 3824	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily	
					CO 945	7:50pm	8:35pm	Daily	
Saipan-Manila					Manila-Saipan				
CO 896	8:10pm	10:50pm	2,4		CO 880	10:40pm	4:20am+1	2,4	
• Beginning Dec. 8, 2003 until April 2004.					• Beginning Dec. 8, 2003 until April 2004.				
Saipan-Tokyo					Tokyo-Saipan				
NW 076	8:55am	1:30pm	Daily		JAL 947	10am	2:20pm	Daily	
JAL 948	3:50pm	6:25pm	Daily		NW 076	10:35am	3:00pm	Daily	
NW 076	5:30pm	7:30pm	Daily		NW 077	5:45pm	045A+1	Daily	
Saipan-Osaka					Osaka-Saipan				
JAL 940	6:30am	8:30am	Daily		JAL 946	9:00pm	1:25am+1	Daily	
Saipan-Nagoya					Nagoya-Saipan				
NW 076	8:55am	11:40am			CO 874	12:35pm	5:10pm	Daily	
CO 879	8:55am	11:35am			NW 077	5:45pm	045A+1	Daily	
Saipan-Seoul					Seoul-Saipan				
OZ 255	2:40am	6:30am	Daily		OZ 259	5:20pm	1:40am+1	Daily	
Saipan-Rota					Rota-Saipan				
NW 3806	7:45am	8:15am	Daily		NW 3850	9:00am	9:30am	Daily	
NW 3807	10:00am	10:30am	Daily		NW 3852	1:30am	2:00pm	Daily	
NW 3803	4:15pm	4:45pm	Daily		NW 3856	7:00pm	7:30pm	Daily	
Saipan-Tinian					Tinian-Saipan				
ZU 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily		ZU 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily	
ZU 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily		ZU 104	7:50am	8am	Daily	
ZU 106	8am	8:10am	Daily		ZU 108	8:20am	8:30am	Daily	
ZU 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily		ZU 109	9am	9:10am	Daily	
ZU 109	9:10am	9:20am	Daily		ZU 110	10am	10:10am	Daily	
ZU 111	10:45am	10:55am	Daily		ZU 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily	
ZU 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily		ZU 114	12pm	12:10pm	Daily	
ZU 115	1pm	1:10pm	Daily		ZU 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily	
ZU 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily		ZU 118	2:50pm	3pm	Daily	
ZU 119	4pm	4:10pm	Daily		ZU 120	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily	
ZU 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily		ZU 122	5pm	5:10pm	Daily	
ZU 123	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily		ZU 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily	
ZU 125	6pm	6:10pm	Daily		ZU 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily	
NW 3825	4:30pm	4:42pm	6 & 7		NW 3824	7:45pm	7:57pm	5 & 6	
NW 3827	8pm	8:15p	New FL 5						
Rota-Guam					Guam-Rota				
NW 3806	9:30am	10:00am	Daily		CO 910	6:25am	7:10am	2,6	
NW 3801	12:30pm	1:30pm	Daily		CO 941	8:25am	7:10am	1,2,4,7	
NW 3803	5pm	5:30pm	Daily		NW 3806	7:45am	8:15am	1,2,4,7	
NW 3806	7:00pm	5:30pm	5		NW 3806	7:45am	8:15am	2,6	
NW 3827	8:30pm	9:15pm	5		NW 3850	8:00AM	08:30am	Daily	
					NW 3850	10:00am	10:30am	Daily	
					NW 3857	10:00am	10:30am	Daily	
					NW 3856	5:45pm	6:15pm	Daily	
Tinian-Guam					Guam-Tinian				
NW 3825	5pm	5:45pm	6 & 7		NW 3824	6:30pm	8:15pm	(1 stop in GPM) 5	
NW 3827	8:30pm	9:15pm	5						
(Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental Airlines; NW: Northwest Airlines; JAL: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana Airlines; PA and ZL: Pacific Islands Aviation. ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)									

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE							
Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100	7:30am	8:00am	Daily	FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100	8:20am	8:55am	Daily	FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200	10:00am	10:30am	Daily	FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200	10:45am	11:15am	Daily				
Guam-Rota				Tinian-Saipan w/connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily	FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily	FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily	FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily	FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily	FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily	FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily	FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily	FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily	FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily				

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., DECEMBER 31, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough extends from 4N130E to 2N145E and ends near the equator at 175E. Low-level convergence near the trough is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms southeast of Palau and Yap near the equator between 1N and 6N from 137E to 146E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms also extend across Kosrae State eastward through southern portions of the Republic of the Marshall Islands between the equator and 8N from 160E to 180. A dissipating shear line extends from 25N180E... south of Wake Island and Guam to 10N144E then west to 11N130E. Low clouds and light showers extend up to 80 miles north of the boundary. Heavier showers associated with the shear line are found north of Palau between 10N and 12N from 130E to 137E.



SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 20-25 mph and gusty.



GUAM AND ROTA
Scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 mph.



PALAU
Mostly cloudy with iso-lated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



POHNPEI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Mostly cloudy with iso-lated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.



KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolat-ed showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.



CHUUK
Partly cloudy with isolat-ed showers.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with scat-tered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Sunny	72F (22C)	59F (15C)
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	37F (3C)	20F (-7C)
Hong Kong	Sunny	72F (22C)	63F (17C)
Honolulu	Cloudy	81F (27C)	69F (21C)
London, England	Partly Cloudy	46F (8C)	35F (2C)
Los Angeles	Cloudy	63F (17C)	48F (9C)
Manila	Cloudy	84F (29C)	70F (21C)
Melbourne	Sunny	79F (26C)	62F (17C)
Miami	Partly Cloudy	78F (26C)	67F (19C)
New York City	Cloudy	48F (9C)	36F (2C)
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	47F (8C)	32F (0C)
Paris	Partly Cloudy	38F (3C)	28F (-2C)
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	48F (9C)	35F (2C)
Rome	Rain	51F 11C)	35F (2C)
Salem, Oregon	Cloudy	42F (6C)	35F (2C)
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	56F (13C)	42F (6C)
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	38F (3C)	22F (-6C)
Tokyo, Japan	Sunny	52F (11C)	42F (6C)
Washington, DC	Cloudy	56F (13C)	42F (6C)

BOE reviews new 7-year CIP proposal

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Board of Education is reviewing its proposal for a new seven-year capital improvement project that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

BOE chairman Herman T. Guerrero said the Public School System may introduce changes to the proposal, which was drafted last year. “We’re reviewing it to see what needs to be amended,” he said.

Information contained in the proposal has not been formally discussed with federal authorities.

The PSS had submitted a \$34-million federal funding request for the construction of three new schools on Saipan, over 50 more classrooms, gymnasiums, and other school facilities throughout the islands.

This was contained in the PSS’ educational infrastructure report submitted to Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente last December for inclusion in the Covenant Sections 702 and 902 negotiations.

The government had expected to begin Covenant negotiations with DOI’s David Cohen in early January 2003 but this has not materialized up to now.

Based on the PSS report, Saipan needs some \$30.5 million; Northern Islands, \$950,000; Tinian Head Start, \$80,000; and Rota, \$3.1 million.

Education commissioner Rita H. Inos said three new schools would have to be built on Saipan in view of the increasing population in some villages. These schools would include the As Matuis Elementary School worth \$6.5 million, including collateral equipment and other infrastructures; a second Kagman Elementary School, \$6.5 million; and a Marpi secondary school, \$7 million.

Inos said G.T. Camacho Elementary School currently serves the San Roque area but four of its six buildings need renovation to meet safety standards.

Depending on the growth rate, a portion of the G.T. Camacho School may be converted into Head Start classrooms.

Inos said Kagman, which is the fastest growing area on Saipan, needs a new elementary school to accommodate projected students in five years. Kagman registers a growth rate of 5 percent—or 38 students per year.

Inos said the PSS needs to secure some five hectares of property for the new school. An elementary school requires a minimum area of 4.5 hectares, while a secondary school needs a minimum of seven to 10 hectares, depending on the type of needed facilities.

The PSS report said Kagman High School, which opened in August 2002, will need 10 more classrooms with

restrooms and other infrastructures, including a parking facility with asphalt pavement. This would need \$700,000, based on a \$70,000-budget per classroom.

A gymnasium (\$2.5 million) and a track and field (\$240,000) for the high school are also needed.

PSS said the secondary stu-

dent population in Marpi, with an estimated 8 percent growth rate, may double within five years.

“Since Kagman has a secondary school, it would be appropriate to provide a secondary school to Northern Saipan,” Inos said.

Southern High School needs a parking facility, \$165,000; a gymnasium, \$2.5 million; a track

and field, \$240,000; baseball diamond, fencing, dug out, backstop and bleachers, \$105,000; and additional classrooms, \$972,000.

Other additional classrooms will be constructed in Dandan (five), San Vicente (six), Head Start (17), and Sinapalo, Rota (eight).

The PSS had recently asked the Legislature to reprogram over \$3.8 million for the im-

mediate construction of new classrooms. PSS said it urgently needs the money to resolve overcrowding in four schools: Garapan and Kagman elementary schools, Kagman High School, and Saipan Southern High School, as well as the Garapan Head Start.

The board had said that 43 new classrooms need to be built

to accommodate the current enrolment of 10,790, as of Aug. 5.

In a report, the board said that Kagman elementary will need 17 new classrooms, Garapan needs seven, Saipan Southern High School, six; Kagman High, two; GTC Elementary, three; and Dandan, two; while Oleai, San Vicente, San Antonio need one new classroom each.

nikko

saipan
computer

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Gore's Game

There goes Al Gore again. Remaking himself. Remaking the Democratic Party. Remaking America. Or so he says. The former Democratic nominee for president shook up the 2004 Democratic presidential race by endorsing Howard Dean for the nomination. Gore's blessing gives the former Vermont governor, who has been running as an insurgent, the patina of support from the party establishment. And it solidifies Dean's position as the front-runner for the nomination, as unlikely as that may seem.

Does that mean the race is over? Not so fast! Not when there hasn't been a vote cast yet. There's too much about Dean that isn't known. And it is ridiculously presumptive of the media, us included, to award the nomination before any real Democratic voters have been heard from. Let's wait for Iowa, New Hampshire and then all the big states to weigh in.

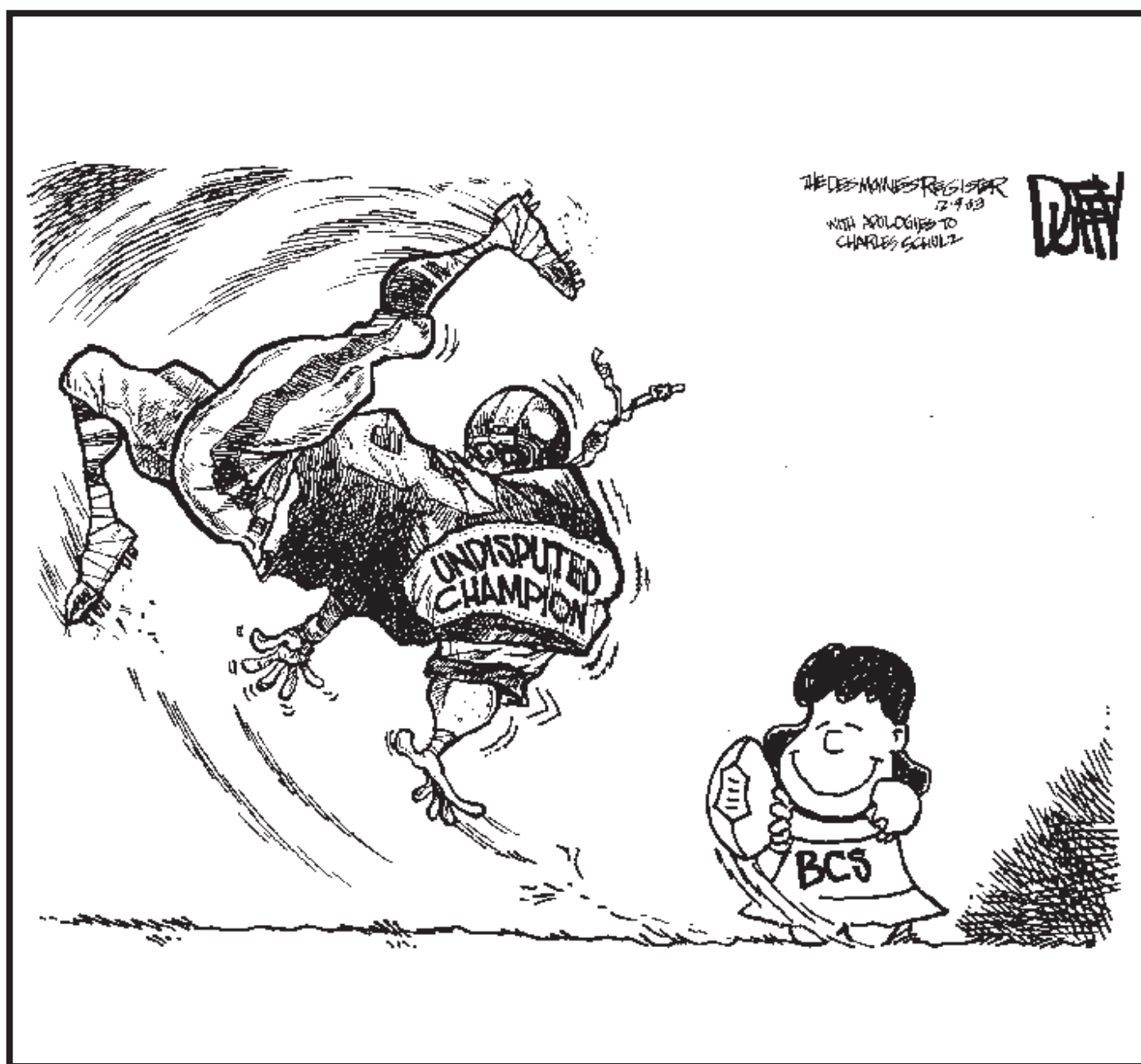
Still, Gore's announcement in the city yesterday was a stunner. Insiders say Gore, who models himself a futurist, was taken with Dean's New Age campaign, especially his use of the Internet to connect with young voters. And Gore, the former vice president, agreed with Dean's early opposition to the war in Iraq.

But while Gore's endorsement will help Dean's candidacy gain a certain credibility, Gore is a somewhat tarnished figure who has grown smaller since he lost the contested election to George W. Bush in 2000. One of the things that hurt Gore the most was the sense that he was constantly "remaking" himself, changing from blue suits to brown, from new Democrat to old. There was a sense of unguineness about Gore, which was not necessarily fair but still hurt him politically. Now he's saying the party has to "remake" itself.

What's his game? Some people were upset that Gore didn't even bother to notify his 2000 running mate, Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, that he was endorsing Dean. It's legitimate to ask how Gore could have chosen Lieberman to be the man to run the nation if anything happened to him and now bypass Lieberman for a man with no Washington experience.

Maybe Gore wants to pick up the New Age voting base that Dean has attracted and use it himself for a run in 2008 if Bush is re-elected. Remake or no, it's still all about politics.

Newsday



Nothing beats a direct flight

For Filipinos—and other members of the community who travel between the Northern Marianas and the Philippines, Continental Airlines' decision to start serving the Saipan-Manila route again is a welcome development. It practically shortens the flying time, thus, making it a stress-free process.

Majority of us have our own personal encounters with a layover—either on Guam or in Seoul, South Korea. And more often than not, it is more straining than fun, no matter how big the airport is or how good the shops are, and how short the layover time is.

I have personal encounters with a layover that is longer than the actual trip itself. I still unfortunately remember strolling around the Guam International Airport for 10 grueling hours when I was once sent to Palau for an assignment. I was literally trapped inside the Guam airport because I didn't have a U.S. visa then to allow me entry into the island-territory.

Just this year, I had to wait 12 backbreaking hours inside South Korea's Incheon International Airport when I attended—together with journalists from all over Asia—a roundtable discussion on migration issues in Bangkok, Thailand.

My Palau and Thailand trips are not what you would say a regular destination among most of us, especially Filipino nonresident workers in the CNMI who mostly touch base once every year. But this year's suspension of the Transit Without Visa program forced a big number of us away from the usual Saipan-Guam-Manila flights offered by Continental Airlines into Asiana Airlines' Saipan-Incheon-Manila service, or Northwest Airlines' Saipan-Japan-Manila route.

There's nothing wrong with stopping over Incheon or Narita on our way to the Philippines but there are also some factors to consider. It's still cheap to take Asiana's Saipan-Incheon-Manila flight but the route practically lengthens the traveling time: 2 hours advance check-in plus 3.5 hours flying time from Saipan to South Korea plus 2 hours layover in Incheon plus about 3 hours flying time from Seoul to Manila equals about 10 exhausting hours of traveling.

Yet still, many travelers put more weight on the extra money they would save by sacrificing a little time strolling around South

By ALDWIN R. FAJARDO

The views expressed are strictly that of the author.
Fajardo is the editor of the Saipan Tribune.



Korea's gorgeous Incheon airport, with all the fascinating retail shops and food establishments sprawling inside it.

Northwest also offers a very tempting package for Manila-bound travelers but it doesn't seem to suit most Filipino workers' travel desires due to strict visa requirements implemented by the Japanese government. Still, a possible visit to the Tokyo Disneyland is still a major thing to consider.

A direct service between Saipan and Manila is the best solution to Philippine-bound passengers' traveling dilemma. Bottom line is, nothing beats a direct service, especially if the destination is only about three hours away from the point of origin.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

We are now in the process of reviewing the accomplishments of those who have made it to the final list of nominees for the annual Saipan Tribune Person of the Year. The Tribune gives this award each year—now on its fifth year—to recognize the efforts and commitment of those who untiringly and consistently do their part in making the CNMI a better place to live in.

Like last year, we will be naming one Person of the Year for 2003 and nine honorable mentions. Nominees are judged based on the impacts of their contributions or efforts on the lives or overall well-being of the people or the community they intended to serve.

Among those who have been recognized in the last five years were: HIV/AIDS educator Moses Saburo (1999); Ports Authority executive director Carlos Salas and then-board chairman Roman S. Palacios, and then-House Speaker Ben Fital (2000); David Borja, former principal of Hopwood Junior High School (2001); and Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona for 2002.

Who will it be this year?

The adult GPA

Whether it's the Commonwealth seeking to float \$40 million in bonds, or your brother in law trying to finance a car, it seems like every entity and living being on the planet has got a credit rating and credit score appended to their name.

Oh, yuck, credit scores. Does anyone really want to hear about those?

Well, the good citizens of the Commonwealth should, given that the ghost of the Union Bank of California may be haunting your financial records. UBOC is long gone from our shores, but if you held a UBOC credit card, you may have been subjected to a little surprise. At issue is the fact that UBOC actually transferred some or all (I've been told it was all) of its credit card business to another company.

The transfer actually pre-dated UBOC's exodus from our fair shores, and the two events were entirely unrelated.

If you ever dealt with UBOC, you'll recall that they were a prime bank, a quality outfit. UBOC, is a corporate cousin of the Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi, and the Japanese focus on excellent customer service was certainly a hallmark of UBOC's operations. First Hawaiian Bank, as you know, picked up UBOC's action here and retained many of the excellent staffers, which was good news for the community.

On the less happy end of things, when UBOC slipped its credit card business to another company, things didn't end so well. You have to be very careful who you deal with in the credit card industry, since not all companies are honorable.

As for any former UBOC customers, then, you should review your records carefully. If you have a credit card that has "Union Bank of California" stamped on the front, it may not really be issued by UBOC. Yikes! If you find some unknown company lurking in the background on that one, I'd advise closing the account immediately and taking your business to another place. This is a "consumer alert" from me, and I'll be happy to compile reader feedback on this note, so feel free to e-mail me any experience you may have had along these lines. I have uncovered some disturbing information on the topic and my interest is piqued, big time.

Since I'm on the credit topic, I'll mention that American Express, as well as at least one credit reporting agency, is selling a credit monitoring service. These guys eyeball your credit activity on a daily basis, in order to prevent identity theft or other monkey business from messing with your records. I paid 99 buckaroos to enroll in the service for one year. Cheapskate that I am, I think it's worth dropping a C-note on the deal.

Credit records have become the Grade Point Average of adult life. It's worth keeping an eye on your files.

Meanwhile, I'm gathering the writing files for next year; we've got a lot of ground to cover. The Commonwealth economy will be the hot topic, of course. And—drum roll—yours truly is preparing to launch a new business that you'll be hearing about, which is why I've been in meetings with attorneys this week and have not answered anyone's calls or e-mails. So much for goofing off during the holidays. In fact, I get so worn out planning for 2004 already that I'm wishing that 2003 would last a couple of months longer. I guess that Santa can't deliver more time to even the best of boys and girls.



By ED STEPHENS
Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"

Some soulful memories in papa's bag

You had to take off your shoes. No shoes on the gym floor. No sneakers, either. Not if you were going to do the James Brown during a pep rally at my high school. And during those years, from 1966 to 1968, whenever the band broke into, say, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," you were going to do the James Brown.

You had to.

If Martin Luther King Jr. was telling us to stride toward freedom, Brown was showing us how to glide toward it. And of course, we all wanted to arrive in style.

Unlike the twist or the funky chicken, the James Brown required both frenzy and precision—qualities that represented the tensions of our times as we moved from the regimented life of Old South segregation (my school was Booker T. Washington High in Shreveport, La.) toward a world where you could finally say it loud, "I'm Black and I'm Proud!"

The Kennedy Center Honors that Brown received Sunday brought back those memories.

"We honor one of the most influential musicians of the last 50 years," Kennedy Center Chairman James A. Johnson said of Brown. That would put the onset of Brown's influence pretty close to the start of my life.

Last year, I read a profile of Brown in the New Yorker magazine that led me to the conclusion that given Soul Brother No. 1's troubles with the drug PCP and the police, his struggles with past wives, mistresses, girlfriends and others, along with the fallout from some peculiar political stands, he was lucky to be alive.

"Race, poverty and exclusion were the defining features of James Brown's childhood world, and he might easily have seen himself as cursed," Philip Gourevitch wrote in the New Yorker. "Instead, he seems to have understood himself to be a free agent—denied the comforts of a conventional home, but also spared its constraints—with no choice but to fight for emancipation however he could."

Did that explain Brown's weird behavior—or how he survived in spite of it? Did too much adulation and exaltation lead him to believe that he could do no wrong? A Look magazine article in 1969 declared: "James Brown is a new important leader. His constituency dwarfs Stokely Carmichael's and the late Dr. Martin

By COURTLAND MILLOY
The Washington Post



Luther King's." Did such twisted statements go to his head?

All I know is that during adolescence, I'd break out in a cold sweat right along with the Godfather of Soul. I never knew why papa needed a brand-new bag, unless it had wine in it; but I knew what to say when I got something new: "I feel good!" or "I got the feeling!"

And the only way to express that feeling was to do the James Brown—to glide on one leg, if you could, with head bobbing and fists pumping, then spin, jump and fall into a 180-degree split, then snap back up—unhurt—and resume your glide.

I also knew how it felt not to get anything at all, especially from a girl. Again, Brown provided words and rhythm suitable to the occasion in what must be the best begging song

of all time by a male vocalist, "Please, Please, Please."

I counted the word "please" 25 times—seven times back-to-back at the start—on a recording that lasts less than three minutes.

Gourevitch dissected Brown's performance: "With each repetition, he invested the monosyllable with a different emotional accent and stress—prayer and pride, impatience and invitation—and although there was ache in his voice, he did not sound like a man pleading so much as commanding what was rightfully his."

This was not a song for doing the James Brown. Our band couldn't play it, and nobody but Brown could sing it. You couldn't whistle or hum it, either. You could, however, put it on a record player to convey your desire for that special someone to stay just a little longer.

Oh, yes. Good God almighty. Honey, please. Don't. Ohhh. Oh, yeah. Lord. I love you so. Pleeceeeeeease. Don't go. Pleeceee-ee-ee-eease. Don't go. Honey, please don't go. Oh. I love you so.

Foreign currencies and CNMI's economy

ow do changes in value of foreign currencies affect the CNMI's economy?

International currencies, which are free floating, trade like commodities in the international financials markets and their values are determined on buying and selling volumes. However, some countries keep the value of their currencies fixed and only change as they deem necessary or due to international pressure. Examples of free floating currencies are Japanese yen and American dollar while Chinese yuan is fixed in value. Exchange rates are expressed as value of one country's currency in terms of another country's currency. For example, current price or value of Japanese Yen in terms of U.S. dollar is around 110 yen per dollar, similar to how we express the price of a commodity, such as 2 pounds of bananas per dollar.

When the value of a given country's currency rises its products become expensive to other countries to buy and vice versa. For example, U.S. dollar value against yen has decreased from about 120 to 110 yen in about a year. It means that the prices of the Japanese products for us have increased and the prices of our products to Japanese have decreased. In our case, the CNMI's products and services are cheaper to Japanese visitors because the fall in the value of dollar in terms of yen has increased their buying power. This is also a very favorable factor to get more visitors or the visitors who come here to spend more. On the other hand for the Japanese investors who have to send back their investment returns to their parent companies, this factor is unfavorable because it has reduced the yen value of their returns. It has also reduced the yen value of salaries of Japanese business managers who work here.

Now, looking at the Philippines' case whose currency has been

By DR. MOHAMMAD ASHRAF



consistently falling against the dollar, this has an opposite effect to that of Japan. As soon as the Philippine peso falls, it implies an automatic rise in the wages of Filipino workers in the CNMI because they get paid in dollars. In this case it would be in the best interest of Filipino workers to keep their savings in dollars and send home only enough to meet the needs of their families. Unlike Filipino workers, Chinese workers don't have incentive to keep their savings here because the value of their currency is fixed by the government. As you may have noticed in the national

news media the matter of fixed value of Chinese Yuan (RMB) is under serious debate between the U.S. and China. The U.S. government thinks the Chinese are keeping the value of their currency artificially low, which makes U.S. products expensive in China and Chinese products cheaper in the US. The logic behind this argument is there is over a \$100 billion trade deficit

between the U.S. and China. The United States is asking China to set higher rate of its currency or expect retaliatory actions.

In conclusion, I would say our government has no influence whatsoever on the value of any currency and we have to learn to live with the consequences of changing values of currencies particularly in our region. I may also add the news reporting of currency rates would be a valuable service to businesses and workers alike.

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Kauai protesters nabbed over beach access

By TOM FINNEGAN
THE GARDEN ISLAND/PIR

What was supposed to be a beach-access celebration Sunday turned into a confrontation between police and community members trying to access Papa'a Bay on Kauai.

Four people were arrested for trying to enter land at the end of the disputed government road on the property owned by Peter Guber and Mandalay Properties LLC.

After chanting a Hawaiian blessing while holding the hands of his four

daughters, David Denson, clad in a shirt saying "Our rights not 4 sale" and "P.A.S.H." charged toward the nearly 10-foot gate with barbed wire at the top.

He was stopped by police as he tried to walk around the gate. When he tried to cross around the gate a second time, he was arrested.

While cops handcuffed Denson, others tried to walk through the brush around the gate on the other side. Police stopped those people, and Ka'iulani Edens-Huff, Evelyn de Buhr, and Liko Martin were arrested.

All four were arrested for trespassing, said Lt. Roy Asher of the Kaua'i Police Department.

Three of those arrested were trying to exercise their Public Access Shoreline Hawai'i rights, said one of the community activists, who would not allow her name to be used.

PASH rights, which give Hawaiians the right to practice their hunting, gathering, and spiritual traditions, are protected by Hawai'i state law.

Before the arrests, approximately 75 people, including community and

Native Hawaiian activists, local residents and even visitors, were met at the gate by over 10 police officials including Acting Chief Wilfred Ihu, a local representative for Guber, Keith Vito, and Guber's Honolulu attorney, Paul Alston.

The gate marks the end of the government property and the beginning of Guber's private property, said Alston.

But some Kaua'i residents believe the road, extending from Papa'a Road, is a state road that leads directly to the beach.

Peter Waldau handed out copies

of the Fifth Circuit Court's "Final Decree" in 1938 that states in five places "the Government Road thirty feet wide leading to Papa'a Beach." Lt. Asher and Alston both took copies, and Waldau said he has sent one to the mayor's office as well.

"This is not the place to do that," Asher said of Waldau's Circuit Court paperwork. "There is an alternative to this. But if you trespass, we'll do what we have to do. As far as the direction we had, the road ends" at the fence, said Asher.

TAEKWANG

From Page 1

the media.

He, together with legal counsel and former Judge Ed Manibusan, Taekwang executive director Choong Rae Kim, Byung Hae Min, and consultant Manny Sablan, met with the local media Wednesday to speak up on the controversial issue.

Project proponents said they count on the government's commitment to provide a 24-hour potable water on Saipan, particularly in Precinct 3, which they said had actually passed a resolution instructing the CUC to get into the desalination project.

"Unless the government says that we don't need potable water here, then it's the time (we'd stop), but at this time, the company is committed to meet that goal," said Manibusan, when asked about the possibility of the government withdrawing its Request for Proposal for the project.

Earlier, CUC chairman Herman P. Sablan said the OPA finding would not hinder the utility firm from pursuing the project.

OPA, in a preliminary report

released recently, found that CUC actions in handling the project were "tainted and flawed to a significant degree."

This, even as the House committee on public utilities, transportation and communications, which currently reviews the project, said the "OPA report is fairly consistent with our finding so far."

OPA cited that a July 9, 2003 pre-RFP agreement between the CUC board chairman and Taekwang "destroys the concept of a valid, competitive, and unbiased RFP, as required by both CUC and the CNMI Procurement Regulations."

It also cited the lack of confidentiality in processing the proposals, which represents a breach of CUC's procurement regulations.

The CUC board's majority earlier said that Taekwang was the most responsive among three other bidders: Mitsui USA, GET Inc., and Telesource.

Taekwang's draft contract proposes to sell 3 million gallons at \$7.98 per 1,000 gallons a day or some \$136-million in 15 years.

During the press briefing, Guerrero and his associates said the price is open to negotiations, while justifying that the amount covers other items not listed under the RFP.

"Our (computation) covers several items not mentioned in the RFP because we know that these are needed in order to operate a plant," said Kim.

He said Taekwang included piping costs and other production related expenses.

Taekwang also noted that the pre-RFP agreement with CUC "died" when the RFP was introduced about two months later.

"We submitted our unsolicited proposal because we wanted to help the CUC provide a potable water on the island. Now, in order to do that, we're informed (by CUC) to sign an MOU to start discussions. However, before we could even implement it, the CUC told us that they're issuing an RFP so we waited and prepared another proposal that more than complies with the RFP," said Guerrero.

He said that the MOU was only effective for 30 days.

CPA

From Page 1

service is expected to bring in an additional 2,124 passengers for the airline company's 12 nonstop flights between Saipan and Pusan.

"We just hope that this will continue, especially the Manila-Saipan direct air service. It is temporarily set up until April 2004 and we hope that the high demand will persist so that the service will stay," Salas said.

Meanwhile, Salas is also optimistic that despite current problems besetting the seaport division, ocean commerce-related revenues would shoot up in 2004.

Early reports showed that for the first three months of FY2004, seaport

division revenues increased by 17 percent. For October 2004, inbound and outbound cargoes were up by 44 percent compared with the same period in FY2003.

Salas said that the increase was noted despite limited inbound and outbound cargo activities at the Saipan Harbor. "We hope that things would get better in 2004. We also hope that we can find other revenue-generating sources for both airport and seaport divisions."

He stressed, however, that despite the positive indications, CPA would continue implementing its austerity measures, which include working within the 2003 budget level to prevent any increase in operational expenses.

HOUSE

From Page 1

chamber to explain legal technicalities.

In particular, House Floor Leader Jesus T. Attao had wanted to know what would happen to the manpower nurses once Jan. 1, 2004 comes in, since CHC would effectively terminate its contracts with manpower agencies Paras Enterprises, SEAS Inc., and Marianas Health Services. The three agencies supply the CHC with nursing staff totaling 130.

Brown said that effective midnight of Dec. 31, 2003, the contract between CHC and the manpower agencies would end, making the nurses eligible for transfer relief. Negotiations are now ongoing between the manpower agencies and the Department of Public Health for the consensual transfer of these nurses.

Since some of the nurses have pending complaints against some of the manpower agencies over unpaid benefits, Brown said this also qualifies some of these nurses for a grant of a Temporary Work Authorization—which does not require an FTE—while their complaint is being resolved. This is another option that the administration may pursue, she added.

Brown stressed that the administration will consider all possible avenues to ensure that there will be no shortage of nurses at the CNMI's lone hospital and that no breakdown in services would occur.

Under the current continuing resolution level, the CHC is authorized to hire 58 nurses. By increasing the allowed FTE's with an additional 65, this will bring the nursing manpower at the hospital to 123.

Torres objected to the resolution, citing three reasons: that government employees should be U.S. citizens; that the current emergency was created by the Babauta administration itself by seeking for the resolution's passage at the last minute; and that there is not enough money to

foot the estimated \$3 million that would be needed to pay for the new nurses. "We don't have the money. The funding for this would obviously come from other agencies, which would suffer a substantial cut in their budgets," he said.

According to Office of Management and Budget director Ed Tenorio, the administration will be sourcing the additional funding needed from lapsed, unexpended, and unobligated funds, using the governor's reprogramming authority.

Soon after passing the resolution, House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider urged the DPH to do its part in encouraging local students to take up medical and health services professions in college to do away with this reliance on nonresident nurses.

The joint resolution is intended to address the nursing shortage at the CHC and is deemed necessary as the hospital shifts to direct hiring of nurses effective Jan. 1, 2004. The hospital expects to source most of its nonresident nurses from the Philippines.

The shift to direct hiring was prompted by an Office of the Public Auditor report, which had argued that, although CHC will incur an additional cost ranging from \$1.5 million to \$2.6 million a year, this will also improve the hospital's capacity to retain qualified nurses, resulting in lower turnovers and improved patient care.

Public Health Secretary James Hofschneider had also said in Tuesday's session that, to improve morale and reduce the rate by which the hospital's nurses leave for better-paying jobs elsewhere, the direct hiring scheme would offer a compensation package similar to that being offered to North American nurses who are currently working at the hospital. On-island hires would also be given the same benefits as off-island hires, he added.

A manpower nurse gets an average annual salary of \$19,000 while a direct hired nurse gets some \$28,000.

A RESOLUTE

From Page 1

hangovers this time of year.

Since you're thinking about doing a few things better next year, you might as well include one or two consumer resolutions. Here are some that consumer experts and authorities recommend you add to your 2004 to-do list.

Resolve to:

- "Ask why it is needed whenever you are asked for your Social Security number, like at the doctor's office," suggests Susan Grant, vice president for public policy at the National Consumer League. Schools, utility companies, insurance companies, just about everyone asks for your SSN, but only a few can demand it legally (motor vehicles departments, tax agencies, employers, banks). With identity theft victimizing 9.9 million people last year and costing businesses and consumers \$53 billion, Grant thinks consumers need to guard their SSNs better.

- "Develop and practice a home fire escape plan," says U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Chairman Hal Stratton, who is including his wife and two daughters in devising his. "Just checking your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors isn't enough. You have to have a plan to escape." A Roper ASW study last week found that 85 percent of those who resolve to make their homes safer to protect their families will actually follow through.

- Stop paying bills late. "The con-

sequences of making even one late payment can break your 2004 budget!" warn Nancy Castleman and Marc Eisenson, co-authors of "Invest in Yourself: Six Secrets to a Rich Life," whose free e-newsletter and Web site (www.goodadvicepress.com) provide a wealth of money-saving tips. "You'll pay high fees, for sure, but what's worse, you'll be hit with higher rates on everything from your credit cards to your insurance policies."

- Learn about the choices you have for controlling telemarketing calls to your home, says K. Dane Snowden, chief of the Federal Communications Commission's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. Signing up for the National Do-Not-Call Registry was so 2003! Now, consumers need to take the next step—familiarize yourself with the rules governing telemarketing and directions for filing complaints. "Consumers need to understand how to manage telemarketing calls," he says, directing consumers to the FCC's website (www.fcc.gov/cgb/donotcall) for more information.

- Get a real bill-monitoring system, advises Lydia Sermons-Ward, senior vice president of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. "Many consumers try to calculate their debts in their heads and then wonder why they end up with a headache. Buy a notebook or software system that will aid your ability to review what you're spending each month ... and where you can cut down on avoidable expenses."

- Pay more attention to the food you consume, says Eric M. Bost, U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services. "Right now, 64 percent of adults are either overweight or obese. During the past two decades, the percentage of children who are overweight and obese has doubled, and the rate for our adolescents has tripled. We must begin to combat this epidemic by setting an example."

- "Watch out for the growing trend of tricky fees added onto cell phone, hotel, credit card and other bills," says Ed Mierzewski, director of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's consumer program. "It's the new way companies are trying to make money—low-ball advertised prices, then add deceptive charges of a dollar here and a dollar there, or even much more," disguised as extended warranties, credit-card protection plans, delivery fees. "Stand firm and insist that the deceptive charges be deleted," he says, "and, next, file a complaint with your state attorney general and the Federal Trade Commission."

- If "reduce your credit-card debt" and "increase your savings" aren't already your standard procedure, says Sheila Adkins, associate director of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, those are must-do resolutions, period. Adkins' personal resolution: Stop paying with credit. "If I can't pay with cash," she says, "then I probably don't need it."

Not a bad idea—if you can do it.

Pete A. reminds NMI students of scholarship deadline

Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio yesterday reminded Northern Marianas students that only about a month remains before the deadline for the 2004-2005 Gates Millennium Scholars award expires on Jan. 16, 2004.

Grant can only be determined through the submission of a Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA] to the U.S. Department of Education.) The goal of GMS is to promote academic excellence and to provide an opportunity for thousands of outstanding students with significant financial need to reach their fullest potential.

GMS selected 1,000 high-achieving students for the 2003-2004 academic year, bringing the total number of students awarded to more than 7,000 since the program's inception.

All completed nomination materials must be postmarked or submitted on-line no later than Jan. 16, 2004. Student nominees, nominators, and recommenders are encouraged to apply online or download nomination materials on the GMS website, <http://www.gmsp.org>. General information, detailed instructions, and current scholar profiles can also be found on the GMS website.

Throughout December and January, GMS volunteers from the Asian Pacific Islander American communities will conduct information sessions and workshops. To find a site near you, visit the Organization of Chinese Americans website, <http://www.ocanatl.org>, click "Partnerships" on the top, click "Gates Millennium Scholars" on the left-hand side, and then click "Information Sessions and Workshops."

Nomination materials and informational brochures may also be requested on the OCA website. Scroll down the main page and click "Request or order 2004-2005 GMS Nomination Materials or Informational Brochures."

The Gates Millennium Scholars, funded by a \$1 billion grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was established in 1999 to provide outstanding Asian Pacific Islander Americans, African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Hispanic Americans with an opportunity to complete an undergraduate college education in all discipline areas.

Continuing GMS scholars may request funding for graduate education in the following areas: mathematics, science, engineering, education or library science.

In the 2004-2005 academic year, individuals are eligible to be considered for a GMS award if they:

- are Asian Pacific Islander American, African American, Hispanic American or American Indian/Alaska Native;
- are a citizen/legal permanent resident or national of the United States;
- have a minimum GPA of 3.3 on a 4.00 scale (unweighted) at the time of nomination;
- will be entering a U.S. accredited college or university as full-time, degree-seeking freshmen in the 2004-2005 academic year;
- have demonstrated leadership abilities through participation in community service, extracurricular or other activities;
- and meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility criteria. (Eligibility for Federal Pell

microl oh yeah
+red



ELECTRONIC CARD
Filipino workers on Saipan register for an electronic card, a joint-project by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippines' PCI-Equitable Bank, during a recent visit of OWWA officials from Manila.

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

BEAUTIFYING GARAPAN
Key government officials and private sector leaders who have diligently worked to finally get the Garapan Revitalization Project going lead the groundbreaking ceremonies last week.

LIBERTY DONES

LUNCH FOR THE ELDERLY

Senior citizens at the Aging Center were treated to an early Christmas treat Tuesday by the members and officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW holds the luncheon treat to promote camaraderie and patriotism in the community.



PARTY FOR CHRIST
Commonwealth Health Center staff members imbibe the holiday spirit as they gather for the government hospital's annual Christmas party.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

tribune subs



SINGING MANAMKOS LIBERTY DONES
Senior citizens at the Aging Center serenade Gov. Juan N. Babauta, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente and Community & Cultural Affairs Secretary Juan L. Babauta with Christmas carols during a recent holiday treat sponsored by the Governor's Office.



HEAR OUR PLEA EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
Community members trooped to the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe to express their opposition to the proposed Sugar Dock dredging, citing environmental, historical, and sentimental



A STEP AHEAD LIBERTY DONES
The first batch of Northern Marianas College students to graduate on a fall semester was a picture of pride during their graduation Saturday.



RELAX LIKE A KING JOHN RAVELO
Massage attendant Ma. Cristina Villamor shows the way to the rooms of Tropical Blend Spa, the services of which and the tropical ambiance combine for total relaxation that's fit for a king.

sporting
goods



Big strides on behalf of environment

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER



The year 2003 saw the CNMI making big strides in its effort to protect and preserve one of its most valuable resources—the environment. It kicked off the year with the CNMI government officially padlocking the gates of the Puerto Rico dumpsite, which used to be considered as the islands' worst eyesore.

Now, the mountainous dumping site has turned green with vegetation, although funding has yet to be made available to implement a final closure plan that is compliant with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.

The EPA viewed the closure of the decades-old dump as a major feat in environmental protection, particularly with the CNMI managing to open an alternative landfill—the Marpi facility—which the federal agency had described as the "first fully compliant non-military landfill in the entire Pacific."

Gov. Juan N. Babauta led the ceremonial closure of Puerto Rico on Feb. 19, saying the event marks "a new era of respect to our natural environment." Lo-

cated near the Saipan Lagoon, the dump towers over 90 feet on some 20 acres of land. In the early 1990's, the EPA cited the CNMI for violations of the Clean Water Act, after leachate from the dump was found to be polluting the lagoon.

The CNMI inaugurated the alternative Marpi landfill on the same day that the Puerto Rico dump was padlocked. The CNMI Solid Waste Task Force, chaired by Lt. Gov. Di-ego Benavente, pushed for the



completion of the multi-million dollar landfill, the construction of which was undertaken by the joint venture of Dick Pacific Corp. and Pacific Drilling Ltd.

The new landfill has liners that prevent leachate from seeping to the ground to protect the islands' groundwater resources. The facility also has five groundwater monitoring wells and a gas monitoring system. There is a separate area for dumping trash by the public.

The CNMI government



Lower Base Refuse Transfer Station, where Saipan residents could throw their trash instead of driving the distance to the landfill. The facility is equipped with a recycling facility, where the public could also sell aluminum trash for cash.

Following the CNMI's feat in its solid waste efforts was the rising volunteerism among several groups in cleaning up illegal dumping sites. Complementing the Division of Environmental Quality's monthly cleanup were those conducted by the Environmental Interagency Clean-up Operation Team.

The EICOT is composed of various government agencies such as the DEQ; the Coastal Resources Management Office; the Division of Parks and Recreation; the departments of Public Health, Public Safety, Commerce and Public Works; the Marianas Visitors Authority; the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.; and the Saipan Mayor's Office. Later, private groups such

as MOVER, KAMPIL, Bicol Association and CTSI Logistics actively supported EICOT's activities.

The year also witnessed the culmination of the treatment of thousands of tons of Tanapag soil that used to be contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyl or PCB. The former treatment site in Tanapag has become a green field, with the government's private contractor covering the treated soil with several inches of topsoil and planting assorted grasses, including Bermuda, on it.

For the first time, the *Oscar Elton Sette*—a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientific ship—visited Saipan in August and began the first extensive scientific exploration of CNMI waters. Led by commanding officer Ken Barton,



the 224-foot *Sette* went on an intensive month-long voyage to the Northern Islands to document new and existing marine dis-

coveries on fisheries, coral reefs and even underwater geology. NOAA's Coral Reef Ecosystem Division chief, Dr. Russell E. Brainard, led some 20 scientists, including those from the CRMO, DEQ, and the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Scientists from the universities of Guam, Hawaii and Florida also joined the scientific mission.

The marine study resulted



in discoveries that reaffirmed the marine biodiversity of the CNMI's waters as far as the Northern Islands. The mission documented coral reef fish species found in Sarigan, Zealandia Bank and Agrihan, which are considered as new records. The scientific team recommended that a portion of the Northern Islands' waters be declared as a federally protected area, with the deep lagoon and diversity of habitats, particularly in Maug. A portion of Maug's waters has fish species common in rich coral habitats.

The scientific mission also led to the discovery of volcanic ash that were heavily deposited on the waters surrounding Anatahan, resulting in massive coral deaths that have impacted on the marine life. Anatahan's volcano, which had been dormant since time immemorial, vented its fury on May 10, spewing plumes of ash to an altitude of over 10,000 feet. To date, Anatahan's volcano continues to emit steam and gas. The government has declared the island and its surrounding areas off-limits to the public.

Federal and local scientists expressed fear that the impact of ash sedimentation on Anatahan's waters and its coral reefs would continue for many years. On certain areas, scientists spotted not a single fish on Anatahan's waters. Before the massive coral deaths on Anatahan, the scientists believed that its waters used to have well-developed reefs, as evidenced by the "nice diversity of recently dead coral skeletons."

Before the *Sette*'s scientific mission, the Department of Lands and Natural Resources conducted marine studies sometime in June, which led to the discovery of eight fish species that have not been previously



named by scientists anywhere in the world. The eight were among the 95 species of reef fish that were newly documented in a study conducted by the agency in May, bringing the total number of documented fish species in the CNMI to about 1,045 out of an estimated 1,200 fish species on local waters. Three of the eight newly discovered fish species belong to the *Eviota* genus, two others belong to *Enneapterygius*, while the remaining three each belong to *Trimma*, *Dinematichthys* and *Helcogramma*.

The CNMI hosted the 10th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force



meeting in Oct. 3. Ranking federal and insular officials convened on Saipan to discuss protection strategies for corals reefs. "Coral reefs are valuable assets providing food, jobs, protection from storms and billions of dollars in revenues each year to local communities and national economies."

Guam Gov. Felix Camacho, American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono, CNMI Gov. Juan N. Babauta, and Palau President



Tommy Remengesau Jr. joined the discussions. Tim Keeney, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, and Judge Craig Manson, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, led federal officials in the task force meeting as co-chairs. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton formed the task force in 1998 in response to a global crisis in coral reefs.

crm

PUBLIC NOTICE
December 12th, 13th, 14th, 2003

Acute Violations of CNMI Drinking Water Regulations

Drinking Water Violation: Fecal Coliform-*E. Coli* Areas Between North San Vicente and Papago

(SAIPAN, December 11th, 2003)— Public Water Systems are operated by the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation. The public utility is in violation of the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations in the northern most point of San Vicente, exiting to Papago. All residents in the water regions / village(s) listed are immediately advised of an acute water violation that indicates the presence of the bacteria: *E. Coli*. that is in the family of fecal coliforms.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation collects water samples according to a Monitoring Plan, approved by the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Routine water samples were collected on December 9th and 10th. An independent laboratory, Quality Water, incubated and analyzed the samples. At 3:00 p.m. December 10th, the Utility was notified of possible violations and advised to repeat water collection samples from within the distribution system’s Monitoring Plan that are located in a broader scope, called, “upstream” and “downstream” sampling. Technicians can then determine the extent, scope, or size of the contamination, as noted in the chart below.

Quality Water verifies, on December 11th, that the CUC distribution system remains in violation in northern San Vicente with the presence of fecal coliforms. The utility is required to notify the public and the Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) of the violation of the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations.

Health Effects

The presence of **Fecal Coliforms** or *E. coli* bacteria is a serious health concern. These bacteria are not generally harmful themselves, but their presence in drinking water is usually associated with animal or human wastes, indicating a problem either with treatment (such as power outages stopping chlorine treatment systems) or problems within the public water transmission pipelines (such as a broken pipe that allows contaminated runoff from homesteads, commercial lots, ranches, and polluted soils to enter into the system). The water may be contaminated with organisms that can cause disease. Short-term health effects may include: diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or possibly jaundice, and associated fatigue. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, and people with severely compromised immune systems. These symptoms, however, are not only associated with drinking water; they may also be caused by a number of other factors, other than the water. To reduce adverse health effects, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets drinking water standards. Under the standards, all drinking water must be free of any *E. coli* or Fecal Coliforms.

Do You Have A Catchment Tank?

If people collect, store, keep or mix CUC water and rainwater in catchment tanks, or if you store water for several days, we strongly urge customers to first boil water before use. (Bring the water to a rapid boil for about five minutes; OR alternately, household bleach (Clorox™ or Purex™) may be added: 5 drops per gallon or 2 teaspoons per/one hundred (100) gallons of water. Mix the bleach and water and let it stand for 30 minutes before using the water. Otherwise, there are no actions or alternatives necessary.

Corrective Actions Taken

Chlorine Gas is injected into the water. The gas kills harmful bacteria and is a common treatment method. On Thursday, December 11th, 2003, the Lab crews will again collect repeat samples from the contaminated zone and the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation Water Chlorination Teams continue to inject chlorine gas at Treatment Stations. The chlorine is fed into the entire distribution systems—at all 13 Saipan water zones. Water is treated primarily at the reservoirs and tanks; and where no tanks are yet built, the wells are first grouped together for treatment prior to water distribution. CUC operates a total of 132 water wells and three springs. has 42 Treatment Stations that are monitored for compliance under the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations, enforced by the DEQ.

Testing Date(s)	Monitoring Plan Sample Site	Villages & Locations of Violation
December 9-11 th	Rita Guerrero Test Site	Between north San Vicente and Papago
December 10 th :	Anthony Guerrero Test Site	Same Family Property-north San Vicente

For more information about water operations, customers may contact CUC Water Manager Jess Castro 235-7025; or CUC Special Advisor Pamela A. Mathis at 235-7037. Questions that relate to the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations can be addressed to DEQ, at Joe Kaipat, at 664-8500.



Safety Products Micronesia, Inc. kicks off local operations during its grand opening today at its Middle Road, Gualo Rai office. From left are Danny Badidles, Kits Marasigan, Desiree Chargualaf and Allen Reyes.

Safety is new company's top concern

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

After a year of operating his Pacific Rainbow Paint Supply on Saipan, trader Manu Melwani expands his local business venture by officially opening the Safety Products Micronesia, Inc. today.

The new company joins Pacific Rainbow in its Middle Road, Gualo Rai office, adjacent to the former location of The Field's Sports Bar and Grill.

"There aren't very many [safety product] companies around. We wanted to give it a try here," said Desiree Chargualaf, Safety Products' purchasing manager. The company is an affiliate of Guam's Safety 1st Systems, which began operations in 1989.

Safety Products carries the popular Leatherman brand in tools. These products have 20-year warranty, Chargualaf said. The store also sells Pelican flashlights with lifetime warranty.

On display at the Saipan outlet are fire extinguishers, safety shoes, ring buoys, hard hats, safety gloves and glasses, raincoats, suits, chemical-resistant boots, and first aid kits, among other products.

The company also has absorbents, which are used to absorb petroleum products in cases of spillage.

Chargualaf said all products the company carries are compliant with standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the American National Standards Institute.

On Guam, she said the business has boomed even as Supertyphoon Pongsona devastated the island's economy. The post-typhoon construction boom has had a positive effect on its business.

Chargualaf said, however, "Safety is not just for construction boom. Every company has to have some type of safety."

Safety Products' affiliate company, Pacific Rainbow Paint Supply, has been operating on Saipan for about a year now, exclusively distributing the internationally renowned Sherwin Williams paint products. The Saipan outlet of Rainbow followed that of Guam, which began operations in 1993.

Today, Safety Products invites the public to witness its Gualo Rai outlet's grand opening day. "I'd like every-body to come down and visit us," Chargualaf said.

CDA closes \$40-M bond

The Commonwealth Development Authority has successfully issued the \$40-million General Obligation bonds.

Authorized by Public Law 13-17, as amended, the bonds will constitute debt of the CNMI issued pursuant to the Commonwealth Constitution, the GO bond law, the Bond Act, and other applicable laws.

The \$40-million general obligation bonds, Series 2003A received a rating of Ba3 from Moody's Investors Services and B+ from Standard & Poors on Nov. 26, 2003.

Maturing on October 1, 2033 with an interest rate of 6.750 percent, the bonds were sold to Lehman Bros.—the underwriters—on December 4, 2003.

At the office of Watanabe Ing, Kawashima & Komeiji LLP, Honolulu, Hawaii, CDA board chairman Sixto K. Igisomar, executive director MaryLou S. Ada, legal counsel Vicente T. Salas; Gov. Juan N. Babauta, consultant Rex I. Palacios, Marianas Public Lands Authority commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Finance Robert Schrack, and legal counsel Alan Lane closed the \$40-million general obligation bonds.

Immediately after the closing, Lehman Bros. will deliver to bond trustee Bank of Guam—via federal funds wire transfer—the \$40-million GO Bond proceeds less the cost of issuance (\$1.5 million), to be deposited to the CNMI account in BoG.

Monies will be available for disbursement by MPLA after Monday, Dec. 15, 2003.

Proceeds of the \$40-million general obligation bond issue will be issued to pay for certain parcels and other private real property taken by the government for public roads, high-ways, as well as to fund the construction of the Adult Correctional Facility as provided in the Bond Act.

Experts see rise of 'enterprise' software

By JUSTIN POPE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

The corporate spending that drives the technology sector is as strong as it has been since the end of the 1990s boom, giving the industry optimism as it heads into 2004.

"This is not a burst. This is a sustainable interest," said Bill Zadrozny, chief executive of Siemens Financial Services, which helps businesses lease and finance new technology investments. "There were false starts before, but this one looks for real."

In the third quarter, equipment and software expenditures jumped 17.6 percent, helping fuel the 8.2 percent increase in gross domestic product, according to the Commerce Department.

Most of the end-of-year forecasts focusing more specifically on technology spending expect a 4 percent to 6 percent increase in 2004, notably healthier than in previous years when corporate stinginess weighed down the entire economy.

But that hardly amounts to another boom, and the momentum is uncertain, experts caution. In fact, there appears to have been some slowdown during

the fall, perhaps because newly confident information technology managers realized they had overspent budgets set last year when times were tougher.

"I don't think it's going to return to the boom days of five years ago anytime soon," said Tom Pohlmann, who follows technology spending at Forrester Research.

And the growth that comes won't necessarily be across the board. In year-end interviews, experts offered their view of the shape of tech spending in 2004.

■ **Software:** The buzz word for 2004, recycled from dot-com jargon, is "enterprise" software. Broadly speaking, companies are expected to shift away from software that targets cost-cutting—the overriding priority of the past three years—and toward software that backs up genuine "enterprise" or "strategic" moves.

Basically, that means companies will buy software to support new initiatives involving supply chains, security, data storage and the way they interact with customers over the Internet.

Forrester expects overall information technology spending to grow 4

percent, but such "strategic" spending to rise 9 percent.

The growth will be concentrated in such industries as retail and insurance, Forrester found, where technology goes to the heart of how businesses interact with customers.

But the software industry still faces some big problems, notably an absence of "killer applications." Nobody doubts products are getting better, but it's been several years since the industry has come up with anything so innovative that customers simply have to buy it.

■ **Hardware:** Tech budgets and hiring are inching up, and all that equipment purchased during the last boom is aging. In short, all the pieces are in place for a strong year.

Forrester checked with 818 North American companies with revenues exceeding \$500 million and found that 40 percent of them considered computer replacements and Windows upgrades to be priorities for next year.

When companies bring in new workers, they don't put them to work on old equipment, said CIO Magazine Publisher Gary Beach. And new hardware purchases will eventually trickle

down to other sectors.

"That new machine is going to take up a little more network bandwidth, so eventually they might be looking for new routers," he said. "More importantly, for the software community, new employees take up a seat license."

■ **Wireless:** Look for more companies to embed tiny computers and radio tags in their trucks, crates and factories to provide more accurate information and help them run more efficiently. Many companies discovered the cost-cutting virtues of tight inventory tracking during the downturn, and many companies are starting to look more seriously at wireless as the way to get there.

Many companies don't have a choice. Wal-Mart is forcing its suppliers to invest in radio frequency identification tags to help the retail giant track its inventory.

■ **Telecom:** Look for more businesses and consumers to connect their telephones to an Internet-based service using the technology known as "voice over Internet Protocol," or VoIP. Earlier this month, three major communications companies—Time

Warner Inc.'s cable TV unit, Qwest Communications International Inc. and AT&T Corp.—announced plans to sell Internet phone services to consumers.

"It's not a tidal wave, but people are saying, 'OK, we've hit the reliability level,'" with VoIP connections and quality, said Zadrozny, of Siemens.

The experts also pointed to some areas where growth might not be forthcoming despite expectations.

One is Linux and other open source software. Forrester found relatively few companies considering such technologies crucial or a priority next year.

Another is outsourcing. Companies that embraced sending their technology elsewhere—including overseas—are starting to realize it may be more expensive than they thought, analysts say.

Finally, information technology spending on the real human beings who keeps systems running likely won't budge much. With the labor pool plentiful and companies still to cautious to start big hiring sprees, salaries aren't expected to grow much if at all.

Swedes increasing their use of snuff, citing lower risks

By KARL RITTER
AP WRITER

Inside a waterfront factory soaked with the acrid smell of tobacco, about half the blue-clad workers show an odd facial deformity: Their upper lips look swollen. It's a telltale sign they are sampling some of the 20 tons of smokeless tobacco being produced here daily.

Snus (pronounced snoos)—a Scandinavian form of moist snuff—has been banned elsewhere in the European Union for more than a decade, but its popularity has rebounded strongly in its country of origin, where one of every nine Swedes uses it.

And the top snus maker, Swedish Match, now is targeting world markets with claims that its blend of tobacco, water, salt and flavoring is a safer alternative to smoking.

"We don't claim that snus is a completely problem-free product," Stefan Gelkner, a Swedish Match executive, says while squeezing a pouch of prepackaged snuff under his upper lip. "But we refer to the scientific studies conducted that haven't found any link between snus and cancer."

After falling out of style in the 1970s, the traditionally male, working-class habit has spread into all sectors of Swedish society, male and female. Grimy, used snus packets litter the otherwise clean streets and subway stations of Stockholm.

Meanwhile, the smoking rate has fallen below 20 percent in the Scandinavian country of 9 million people—lowest in the world.

Unlike American snuff, which is placed in the lower part of the mouth, causing users to salivate and spit, a Swedish snus portion, or "prilla," is savored on the gum above the front teeth. Many users opt for snus in thumb-nail-sized paper pouches, to prevent the tobacco from spreading around the mouth.



Stefan Gelkner, CEO of the North European division of Swedish Match, poses outside the factory in Goteborg, Sweden, July 9, 2003.

As protruding upper lips replace smoke rings in Swedish bars and offices, scientists are debating the ethics of replacing cigarettes with another tobacco product—less harmful, perhaps, but just as addictive because of the nicotine it contains.

"I don't think there's any question that Sweden is a model for safer use of tobacco products," said Dr. Brad Rodu, a smokeless tobacco advocate at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. "The only consequential risk of smokeless tobacco is mouth cancer, and historically, that risk is extremely small."

Rodu spent six months researching snus in northern Sweden and claims it's a much safer alternative for smokers who can't kick the nicotine habit. He noted several studies have failed to link snus to cancer, which

Swedish Match attributes to its efforts to remove carcinogens during manufacturing.

But critics say there are other concerns. Apart from causing stained teeth and bad breath, snus raises the pulse and blood pressure. Some studies have linked it to increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and premature births in pregnant women.

"I'm not interested in whether it causes cancer," said Dr. Gunilla Bolinder, chief physician at Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm. "I think it's about quality of life. Snus is extremely addictive."

First-time snus users often feel dizzy and nauseous. Some throw up. But those who get past that find quitting is difficult.

"I've tried to stop several times,

but it is awfully hard," says Rikard Palm, a television news anchor at public service network SVT, whose smile reveals a lump of the black mash. "I use snus almost all the time."

Other well-known users are national soccer team coach Lars Lagerback, Social Affairs Minister Lars Engqvist and Ingvar Kamprad, founder of the furnishings giant Ikea.

According to the World Health Organization, Swedish men have the lowest rate of lung cancer in Europe, partly because of the low smoking rate. Nevertheless, WHO argues against substituting snus for smoking, saying the health effects of snus remain unclear.

The EU banned the sale of snus in 1992, citing a 1985 WHO study that said "oral use of snuffs of the types

used in North America and western Europe is carcinogenic to humans." A WHO committee on tobacco has acknowledged evidence is inconclusive regarding Swedish snus.

Only Sweden is exempt from the EU ban—a concession considered key to Swedish voters when they approved membership in the bloc. Bumper stickers reading "EU—not without my 'prilla'" were a common sight leading up to the 1994 referendum.

Swedish Match is lobbying for an end to the EU ban and has two legal challenges before the European Court of Justice.

"It's illogical and discriminating," says Gelkner, head of the company's northern Europe division. "All other tobacco products are allowed, while snus, which is considered the least damaging to health, is prohibited."

Swedish Match is exploring other markets with traditions of smokeless tobacco, including North America, South Africa and India. Export products are modified to local tastes: American snus is flavored with winter-green oil, Indian products have traces of eucalyptus, licorice and cardamom.

The company's factory in Owensboro, Ky., accounts for about 9 percent of the moist snuff sold in the United States.

At home, Swedish Match has a virtual monopoly. Its factory in Goteborg makes 212 million cans of snus yearly for Sweden and neighboring Norway, which is not an EU member. A new plant just north of the city is expected to boost production by 120 million cans.

A can comes with 1.8 ounces of loose snus, or about 20 prepackaged pouches of 0.01-0.04 ounce.

Palm, 42, who started using snus regularly at age 12, says he empties nine cans a week, for an annual cost of \$1,200. By comparison, a Swedish smoker who buys a \$4.90 pack of cigarettes daily spends \$1,782 a year.

A plan to change your tax picture

By **ALBERT B. CRENSHAW**
THE WASHINGTON POST

Behold, the end is nigh—the end of the year, that is. So what can you do in the next days to improve your tax and financial situation?

“There’s a bunch of things ... that you can do,” said Jeffrey Kelson, a partner in the New York office of accounting firm BDO Seidman LLP.

But he and other experts caution that you should be sure you understand your situation, because, particularly with taxes, recent changes have made old rules of thumb—such as accelerate deductions and defer income—unreliable. The creeping maw of the alternative minimum tax, which gobbles up more and more middle-class taxpayers every year, can make accelerating deductions, for example, counterproductive. At the same time, low tax rates, which may turn out to be temporary, can mean you should recognize income because postponing it could cause it to be taxed at higher rates later.

But if you know where you stand, here are some possibilities:

■ **Payments.** Individuals are cash-basis taxpayers, meaning that the year in which they make a payment is the year in which they get credit for it. So, if you are in a position to use additional deductions, pre-paying state and local taxes, mortgage interest and other such deductible expenses can move them from next year to this one. Generally states and localities take a “the sooner the better” attitude toward such payments, but mortgage lenders can be grumpier about it. Their computers are often set up for a certain schedule, and they may not recognize an early payment on your Form 1098. So if you’re going to try to prepay interest, check with the lender to see if they can handle it.

There are also some special situations, Kelson noted. Teachers, for example, can deduct up to \$250 if they spend their own money to purchase certain classroom supplies. Teachers who have not incurred such expenses but expect to, should go ahead, because they can get another \$250 next year if they need it, and if they don’t use this year’s they lose it.

Another use-it-or-lose-it is a flexible spending account. If you’ve had money set aside by your employer for health care expenses, you’ll lose it if you don’t spend it. The Internal Revenue Service eased the rules this year, so you can buy

over-the-counter medications and other things previously excluded.

■ **Gifts.** If you need a last-minute deduction, a gift to charity can also provide it. If you get the check into the mail before the end of the year, that’s generally enough to cause the gift to be deductible this year. George F. Albright Jr. of J.P. Morgan Private Bank’s Washington office noted that gifts generally must be “completed” by the end of the year—that is, the giver must have relinquished “dominion and control” over the money or other assets, and it must be in the hands of the recipient or the recipient’s agent. However, donations of money to charity follow the “mail box rule,” meaning if the check is in the mail, the gift is treated as completed.

Albright cautioned that gifts of securities can be trickier. Although mailing or delivering properly endorsed stock certificates can do the job, shares held by a broker involve more.

“People tend to think when a direction is given (to their broker) they’ve made the gift. That is a common misconception.... It isn’t a completed gift until the shares are transferred on the books of the brokerage firm” and recorded in the account of the charity, Albright said, noting that “broker-to-broker transfers can take time.” One solution is to get the recipient to open an account at the donor’s brokerage. Then the donor’s agent can also be the recipient’s agent and the transfer can be quite quick.

In addition, don’t forget that you can make non-charitable gifts of up to \$11,000 a year (\$22,000 for a married couple) to anyone, including a child, grandchild or other relative, without incurring gift tax. This provision has lots of highly sophisticated uses, but there are some simpler ones that are plenty useful. For example, did any of the kids or grandkids work during the year? If so, you can use the gift to fund a Roth IRA up to the amount of the earnings or \$3,000, whichever is less. Contributions to a Roth IRA aren’t deductible, but withdrawals later on are tax free. This is a rush item only if you are up against the annual giving limit. You actually have until April 15 to make a 2003 IRA contribution.

Another idea: Fund a Section 529 or a Coverdell Education Savings Account for a child or grandchild. Earnings from these accounts are tax free when used for higher-education expenses or, in the case of the Coverdell, for elemen-

tary and secondary education as well. Neither generates a federal tax deduction, but many 529 plans carry a modest state tax deduction.

■ **IRAs.** Most deadlines for individual retirement accounts are tied to the deadline for filing your tax return, but Ed Slott, a Rockville Centre, N.Y., accountant specializing in IRAs, notes that there is a special deadline this Dec. 31. It involves certain inherited IRAs.

Until last year, people who inherited an IRA from someone who died before starting mandatory withdrawals, and who inherited it by virtue of

being the named beneficiary (not just because they inherited the estate), could opt to take the money out over their life expectancy or within five years. Many people opted for the latter, either out of confusion or because they liked the fact that the five-year rule did not require any set withdrawals, only that the account be emptied within five years.

But last year the IRS reopened the window, allowing the five-year folks to switch to the life-expectancy tables.

However, the right to switch expires at the end of this year. So if you’re making

withdrawals under the five-year rule, check with your account trustee (mutual fund, bank or whatever) to see if it makes sense and if you can do it.

Said Slott: “Every IRA beneficiary who is taking distributions based on a shorter life expectancy than their own should look at these new rules and see if the distribution schedule can be lengthened. Some beneficiaries will increase the life of their inherited IRA by more than 10 times. Imagine being able to add more than 40 years to the life of your inherited IRA instead of having to withdraw it all” in the next two or three

years. The Treasury Department issued guidance last week on how the newly authorized health savings accounts (HSAs) will work. These are IRA-like savings/investment accounts that will be available to anyone who is not eligible for Medicare and is enrolled in a high-deductible medical plan or policy. HSAs may be established beginning Jan. 1, so the Bush administration, which is pushing them, wants to get any questions answered quickly and in ways that will encourage employers and employees to buy in. The rules seem plenty loose.

fun & games
+blue

Nation

Nation amps up New Year's Eve security

By LAURA WIDES
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Security will be extra tight at this year's New Year's celebrations around the country, with military helicopters patrolling over the Rose Parade, Times Square and the Las Vegas Strip.

"I think the level of security this time around within the United States is absolutely unprecedented," Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said on CBS's "The Early Show."

As revelers prepare for New Year's Eve, the nation's terrorism alert is at its second-highest level, though officials said there were no specific threats against the holiday gatherings and urged people to go ahead with their plans.

In Las Vegas, where 300,000 revelers are expected on the Strip, officials announced that armed military helicopters will fly overhead.

Jerry Bussell, Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn's adviser on homeland security, said military helicopters will also be used in New York City, Los Angeles, Washington and other cities with big outdoor gatherings.

"These aircraft are

equipped to dismantle or disrupt any kind of ground attack, and also other aircraft that would attempt to fly into our airspace," said Bill Young, the sheriff in Las Vegas.

Sharpshooters will be posted on hotel-casino roofs, and streets will be blocked off with concrete barricades, Young said. Sightseeing helicopters will be prevented from flying over the Las Vegas Strip from 8 p.m. New Year's Eve to 3 a.m.

In Pasadena, where thousands gather along the 5 1/2-mile Rose Parade route and attend the Rose Bowl football game on New Year's Day, video surveillance cameras will watch the spectators lining the streets.

Flights over the Rose Bowl will be limited to police and military aircraft, and everyone working in the stadium, from hot-dog vendors to TV camera crews, will be required to wear photo IDs.

"We decided not to live our lives in fear, and do what we want to do," said Janet Powles, 60, of Rapid City, S.D., as she watched volunteers apply flower petals to Rose Parade floats.

In Las Vegas, however, terror concerns apparently affected hotel bookings. Deutsche Bank analyst Marc Falcone said New Year's Eve cancellations jumped in the past week and were running twice as high as last year.

In New York City, the New Year's Eve preparations included flight restrictions and military helicopter

patrols over Times Square.

Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said that there will be more officers on duty this year than last, and that they will focus more heavily on hotels, landmarks and ferry terminals. He would not disclose numbers.

Organizers said they expect this year's crowd to be larger than last year's gathering of 750,000.

Manhole covers are being sealed shut in Times Square, and mailboxes, trash cans and newspaper boxes are being removed. Plainclothes officers will mingle with the crowds, and elite counterterror teams will have equipment to detect chemical, biological or radiological contamination.

New Jersey Gov. James E. McGreevey warned revelers headed to New York City to expect long delays at bridges and tunnels—and to prepare for random stops and searches.

"We understand this may infringe on civil liberties but most of all we have a responsibility to keep our families safe," he told CNN.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the city was well-protected.

"Sadly, terrorism is something that we have to live with," he said. "Leave the worrying to the professionals."

Republican Rep. Christopher Shays, however, said people ought to avoid places like Times Square, calling it irresponsible for officials to make people think they don't need to take precautions.



AP
Dairy cows feed in a pen Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2003, at the Sunny Dene Ranch in Mabton, Wash., where federal authorities are trying to determine which cattle came from Canada.

...as USDA upgrades the nation's mad cow defenses

By MARK SHERMAN
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Agriculture Department significantly upgraded the country's defenses against mad cow disease Tuesday, banning meat from cows that can't walk or stand on their own and promising to speed up creation of a nationwide animal tracking system.

The changes, supported by consumer advocates, also were intended to boost confidence in the U.S. beef supply at home and abroad, where more than 30 countries have banned American beef products.

These are "very aggressive actions," Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said Tuesday, one week after the first U.S. case of mad cow disease surfaced in a Washington state Holstein slaughtered Dec. 9.

The changes will include more rapid testing of cattle at higher risk of mad cow disease because of age or the presence of neurological problems. Their meat will not be processed until test results are back.

Veneman also said small intestines from cows will no longer be allowed into the U.S. food supply. Nor will head and spinal tissue from cattle older than 30 months—an age chosen because the disease generally has an incubation period of at least three years, officials said. In addition, the Bush administration is ordering changes in slaughterhouse techniques to prevent meat from being accidentally contaminated with brain or spinal cord tissue that can spread mad cow disease.

"Sound science continues to be our guide," Veneman said.

The Food and Drug Administration, however, said that for the time being it would not prohibit the use of the high-risk cattle products in pet foods and feed for chickens

and pigs, saying there is no scientific evidence to support such a ban. There has been a ban on using cattle products in feed for cattle, sheep and goats since August 1997.

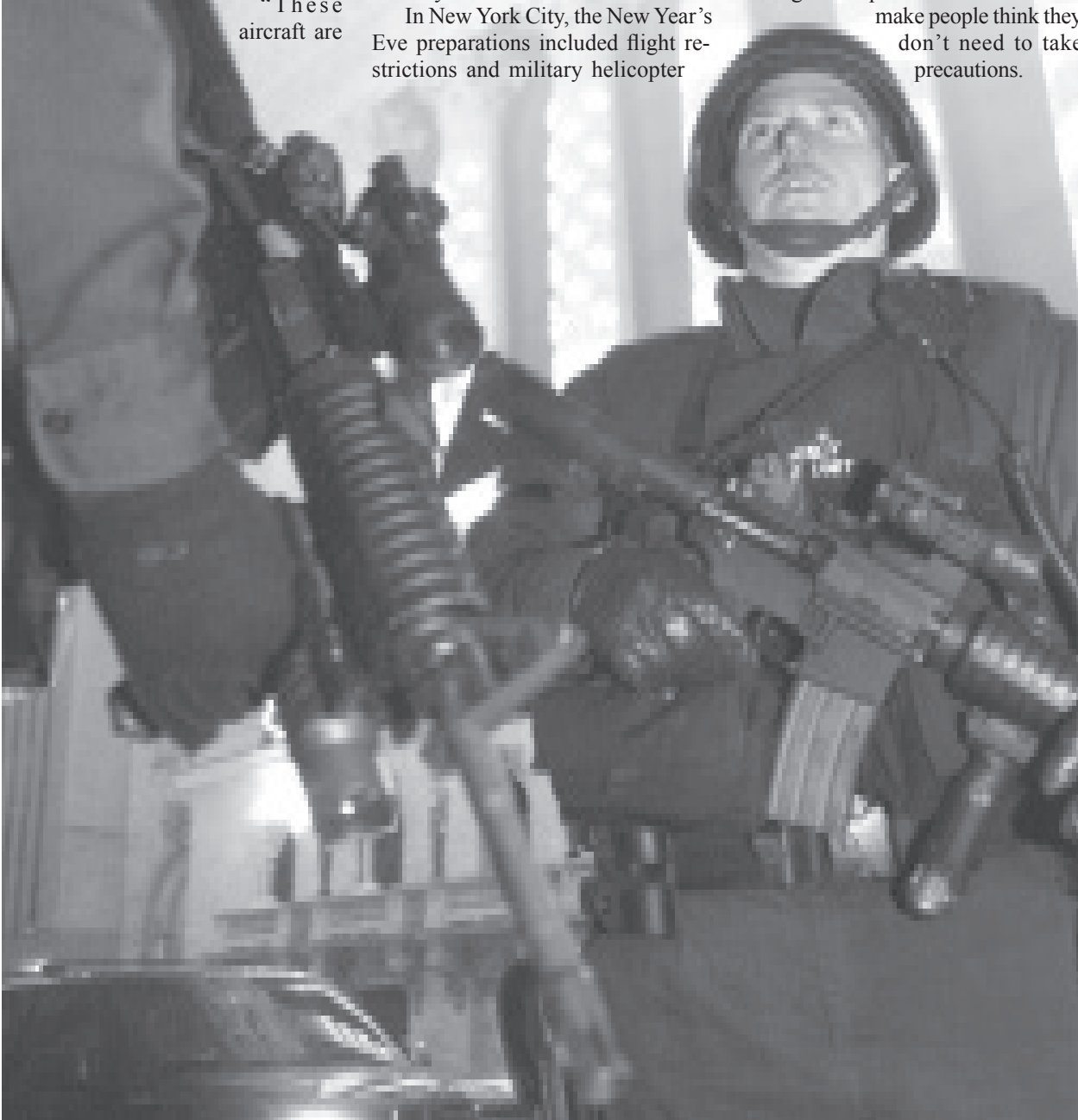
Many of the changes were implemented by Canada last May, when a single case of mad cow surfaced in Alberta. USDA had been considering some of the measures prior to the Washington state case, but a coalition of congressional Republicans and farm state Democrats blocked Congress from including the ban on meat from downed animals in a \$373 billion catchall spending bill that has passed the House and awaits a vote in the Senate.

"We felt good about the system we had in place," said Dr. Ron DeHaven, USDA's chief veterinarian.

Under the new U.S. regulations, the sick cow slaughtered in Washington state earlier this month would not have been allowed to enter the food chain. The cow was sent to meatpacking plants almost two weeks before test results showed it had bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease.

The meat from that cow was allowed to be sold for human consumption after its brain and spinal column were removed and a federal inspector saw no indication of neurological disease. Veneman estimated 150,000 to 200,000 downed animals are among the more than 35 million cattle that are sent to slaughter each year.

USDA ordered a recall of more than 10,000 pounds of meat from 20 cows slaughtered with the Holstein on Dec. 9. The recalled meat was distributed to eight states and Guam, although officials said 80 percent of it went to Oregon and Washington.



AP
New York City Police Detective Edward Bogdanowicz stands guard outside the New York Stock Exchange with other members of the NYPD's Hercules squad Monday, Dec. 22, 2003.

Iraq TV shot tape of POWs Lynch, Piestewa

NEW YORK (AP)—Graphic video footage of a badly injured Jessica Lynch and Lori Piestewa, who may have died shortly afterward, was taken by Iraqi state television following the ambush of the soldiers' Army convoy, NBC reported Tuesday night.

The video, aired on "NBC Nightly News," shows the two Army privates at the hospital where they were taken following the March 23 ambush of the 507th Maintenance Co.

The tape was never aired in Iraq, NBC reported.

Piestewa, her face swollen and bruised and her head loosely bandaged, is shown as someone positions her feet, and then her head, for the camera shot. Her lip is shown curling back in an apparent grimace.

Lynch, 20, of Palestine, W.Va., is also shown bandaged, her lip cut.

Neither appears awake or alert.

"I haven't watched it," Piestewa's mother, Percy Piestewa, said when contacted by The Associated Press. "I don't want to talk to any reporters right now."

Telephone messages left with two spokespeople for Lynch's family were not immediately returned.

USDA recalls improperly labeled sausages

WASHINGTON (AP)—A Wisconsin firm is recalling 46,800 pounds of pork sausage because the product is improperly labeled and does not mention potential allergens contained in the meat, the Agriculture Department announced Tuesday night.

Abbyland Foods of Abbotsford, Wis., failed to list ingredients whey, nonfat dry milk and wheat flour—all potential allergens—on its one-pound packages of "Gourmet Banger" sausage. Larger 10-pound packages of the sausages are also being recalled.

The Agriculture Department has not received reports of allergic reactions caused by the sausages. The mislabeled products were discovered by a department inspector.

The sausages were produced between Jan. 1 and Dec. 30, and sold to restaurants in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Nevada and Pennsylvania.

Abbyland's one-pound sausage packages have the case code "490100," and the 10-pound packages are numbered "490210." Both products carry the establishment number "EST. 1633" inside the Agriculture Department's mark of inspection.

Iraqi doctors have previously said the women were brought to a private clinic following the ambush, and that Piestewa, a 23-year-old mother of two from Tuba City, Ariz., died half an hour later of severe head injuries.

Lynch was rescued by U.S. forces April 1, while five other soldiers were found about two weeks later elsewhere in Iraq. But 11 of their colleagues died during and after the ambush in Nasiriyah.

Piestewa was the first U.S. female service member to die in the war.

The identities of Lynch and Piestewa were verified for NBC by Spec. Shoshana Johnson, one of the rescued soldiers.

"It was a little shocking to see Lori, but it also gave me a little peace to know that they tried, they did their best for her," Johnson, 30, of El Paso, Texas, told the network. "I mean, it was obvious they tried to bandage her up and give her medical care."

NBC told the Army it had obtained the tape before airing it so the families of the soldiers could be told first, according to MSNBC.com.

Defense Department spokesman Jim Turner said Tuesday night officials were aware of the Iraqi video, but had not seen it

FDA rules anthrax vaccine safe, effective

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Food and Drug Administration made it official again Tuesday: The anthrax vaccine is safe and effective, no matter how the infection is spread.

The ruling comes a week after a federal judge halted the military's anthrax inoculations, saying he thought the vaccine was experimental if used to prevent inhaled anthrax instead of the through-the-skin form.

The Justice Department, citing the FDA order, asked U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan to set aside his preliminary ban, except for the six plaintiffs who filed a class action suit against the Defense Department to stop the vaccinations.

As an alternative, the department asked that the court set aside its ruling pending an appeal.

"The longer such an injunction remains in place, the greater is the danger to the men and women of our armed forces and to our military preparedness," the department said. "Prolonged cessation of the inoculation program would gravely threaten the safety of more and more service members."

Mark Zaid, one of the lawyers representing the service members who sued the government, said the FDA rule "is nothing more than after-the-fact gamesmanship to overrule



AP
Pfc. Lori Piestewa, right, and Jessica Lynch smile at Fort Bliss, Texas the day before their deployment to the Middle East in

and did not have details about what it contained.

The United States repeatedly bombed Iraqi TV studios after they aired interviews with American prisoners of war. But this tape survived because an employee at the state network kept it at home, NBC reported.

the court's findings. It appears reflective of policy duress than independent analysis."

The vaccine actually has been government-approved for sale since 1970 and its label says it protects regardless of the route of anthrax exposure, something FDA officials have repeatedly stressed.

The agency published a formal regulation Tuesday restating the approval - a bureaucratic step decades in the making that doesn't change the vaccine's sales status.

The FDA in 1972 gained jurisdiction over vaccines and related products from the National Institutes of Health and began double-checking that they met the agency's requirements. In 1985, FDA proposed the rule codified today, re-certifying the safety of the anthrax vaccine and some other vaccines against bacterial infections. That proposal had never been finalized as the FDA moved on to jobs it considered more important.

The anthrax attacks of 2001 reminded the FDA that it needed to formally finish the job, and the rule was moving through final review by the Bush administration when the judge ruled last week.

It wasn't clear if the FDA rule would have any effect on suspended military vaccinations.

nmc

Nation

Flu among young pregnant women rises

By LIZ AUSTIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DALLAS (AP)—Flu cases among young pregnant women surged at a large public hospital, calling attention to yet another group at serious risk of the flu.

About 80 expectant mothers have been diagnosed with the flu since early October, said Dr. Jeanne Sheffield, a maternal and fetal medicine specialist at Parkland Health and Hospital System. More than 60 were

admitted, with one treated in the intensive care unit, she said.

Pregnancy weakens a woman’s immune system, making her more vulnerable to the virus. Only two of the women had the flu shot, and they had it just before they became ill, so they were not protected.

But Sheffield said it is rare to see so many pregnant women get sick. Most were in their teens and early 20s; all recovered and are out of the hospital.

“Maybe we may have admitted five or 10 a year in the

past,” Sheffield said. “This is much different than normal.”

It isn’t clear why Parkland had so many flu cases among pregnant women. Some health officials speculate that it’s because Parkland—with 15,000 births annually among the leading hospitals for deliveries—is a large public hospital that treats many uninsured people. Its patients are less likely to see a doctor regularly or early in an illness, Sheffield said.

A Texas Department of Health survey found no other serious outbreaks among preg-

nant women in the state, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not heard of any similar outbreaks in the nation.

Sheffield believes Parkland also is being more aggressive about testing for the flu than other hospitals. Testing was done on all pregnant women who showed flu symptoms after one sick woman with an unusually high heart rate was diagnosed with it in October.

“Suddenly all of us were very aware that influenza was around, and it was affecting

our pregnant women,” she said. “We jumped on it very, very quickly.”

Among the states with major flu outbreaks, Texas was the first where the virus was widespread. That may explain why Dallas is the first to report such a high number of ill pregnant women, said Dr. Tim Uyeki, a CDC epidemiologist.

“Any type of infection can lead to pre-term labor,” Sheffield said, adding that the flu can progress to more dangerous infections such as pneumonia

or meningitis.

While flu shots are encouraged for everyone, women in their second and third trimesters are among those at high risk, along with women at any stage of pregnancy who are HIV-positive.

Parkland began a vaccination campaign among pregnant women when doctors noticed the upswing in cases, Sheffield said, and free shots are offered to all pregnant women treated at the hospital or any of its community clinics.

Ridge’s immigration remarks draw fire

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge’s expression of support for giving legal status to immigrants drew congressional criticism Wednesday but heartened advocates.

At a town hall meeting in Miami, Ridge said the country needs to “come to grips” with an estimated 8 million to 12 million illegal immigrants and “determine how you can legalize their presence.” He also said during a visit to Florida on Tuesday that the immigrants should not be rewarded citizenship.

Asa Hutchinson, under-secretary for border and transportation security, said Wednesday in Miami that Ridge’s comments simply reflected the debate in Congress on immigration.

“Secretary Ridge addressed it very honestly yesterday, engaged in that debate, but clearly this administration has not taken a firm policy position on that and the debate continues,” Hutchinson said.

But Rep. J.D. Hayworth, R-Ariz., said it was “inconceivable to me that Secretary Ridge is speaking for the Bush administration when he unilaterally and offhandedly suggests such a radical policy reversal that is guaranteed to encounter strong

opposition in Congress.”

The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, slowed talks about whether to legalize millions of illegal immigrants in the country.

Ridge’s words excited immigration advocates and one of Hayworth’s House colleague, Rep. Jeff Flake, who is sponsoring legislation that would give legal residency to illegal immigrants through work.

“Those who are working here illegally need to be here under a legal framework. Secretary Ridge also understands that this needs to be coupled with serious workplace enforcement,” said Flake, R-Ariz.

Judy Golub, senior policy and outreach director for American Immigration Lawyers Association, said she thought it was the first time that a top administration official had made “such a clear articulation of the fact that these folks are not threats and deserve some form of legal status.”

Cecilia Munoz, vice president of policy for National Council of La Raza, said Ridge’s comments broke two years of silence by the administration on the legalization issue. **(AP)**

Key parts of campaign finance law upheld

WASHINGTON (AP)—A divided Supreme Court upheld the broadest restrictions on campaign donations in nearly 30 years Wednesday, ruling the nation is better off with limits on the financial influence of deep-pocket donors even if money never can be divorced from politics.

Rooting out corruption, or even the appearance of it, justifies limitations on the free speech and free spending of contributors, candidates and political parties, the court said in a 5-4 decision.

“We are under no illusion that (the law) will be the last congres-

sional statement on the matter,” Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O’Connor wrote for the majority. “Money, like water, will always find an outlet. What problems will arise, and how Congress will respond, are concerns for another day.”

Indeed, that already has happened, with groups being formed to collect donations and spend money in ways not covered by the law.

Dissenting were Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy and Clarence Thomas.

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Asia

AP: Ex-Khmer Rouge leader admits genocide

By KER MUNTHIT
AP WRITER

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP)—A former Khmer Rouge leader expected to face a U.N. tribunal acknowledged Tuesday there is “no more doubt left” that his regime committed genocide, the first admission of the communist group’s collective guilt.

Khieu Samphan’s surprising statement in an interview with The Associated Press is a major step in the long overdue effort to bring to justice those responsible for the deaths of 1.7 million Cambodians during the ultra-leftist group’s 1975-79 rule.

Many of the victims were executed; the rest died of starvation, disease and overwork in the Khmer Rouge’s attempt to create an agrarian utopia. Now, with an agreement on a tribunal earlier this month between U.N. and

Cambodian officials, ex-Khmer Rouge leaders should soon face charges for the first time.

A former head of state and one of the few top Khmer Rouge leaders still alive, Khieu Samphan, 72, is certain to be indicted. Speaking by telephone from his home, he apparently hoped to begin giving his version of Cambodia’s bloody history before his likely prosecution for genocide and crimes against humanity.

He insisted he never ordered any killings—and claimed he only learned from a documentary two months ago about the extent of the Khmer Rouge’s crimes.

“Everything has to go the trial’s way now, and there’s no other way,” he said. “I have to prepare myself not to let the time pass away. But I also want the public to understand about me, too. I was not involved in

any killings.”

Until Tuesday, none of the Khmer Rouge’s top leaders had publicly accepted that the government committed genocide.

But Khieu Samphan said he realized he could no longer ignore the Khmer Rouge’s atrocities after he saw a documentary about the notorious S-21 prison, presented to him by a Cambodian-French filmmaker, Rithy Pan.

“When I saw the film, it was hard for me to deny (the killings). There’s no more doubt left,” said Khieu Samphan, who lives in Pailin, 175 miles northwest of

the capital, Phnom Penh.

“I was surprised, because I never thought it (the regime) went to that extent in its policies. S-21 was in the middle of Phnom Penh. It was clearly a state institution. It was part of the regime.”

Until he saw the film, he said he had reserved his judgment about the prison’s existence and atrocities.

As many as 16,000 people are believed to have passed through the gates of the infa-

mous prison but only 14 are thought to have survived. The

prison is now the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

None of the Khmer Rouge’s surviving leadership has faced justice. Many are infirm but—like Khieu Samphan—live and move freely in the country. Pol Pot, the regime’s supremo, died in 1998.

After five years of negotiations, U.N. and Cambodian officials tentatively agreed this

month on steps to set up the tribunal. But the court’s creation has been delayed by a lack of funds and by political instability after Cambodia’s inconclusive general elections left three parties jostling to create a coalition.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan plans to launch an appeal in early February for contributions toward the tribunal’s \$40 million operating budget. Sok An, the Cambodian government’s chief negotiator for setting up the court, has said its formalization will be “addressed immediately” once a new legislature is formed.



Samphan

USDA envoys discuss mad cow in S. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—U.S. agriculture officials arrived Tuesday in South Korea, the second-largest foreign market for American beef, to discuss the discovery of a case of the mad cow disease in the United States.

South Korea is one of more than 30 countries that have banned the import of U.S. beef and other cow parts since the United States announced last week that a Holstein cow in Washington state tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE.

On Tuesday, Taiwanese officials said their nation would ban U.S. beef imports for at least seven years. America is the source of 20 percent of Taiwan’s beef.

Before coming to Seoul,

the American delegation asked Japan to discuss lifting of the beef ban in a meeting in Tokyo but the request was rejected, a Japanese official said on condition of anonymity.

South Korean media had expected the U.S. delegation led by David Hegwood, a trade adviser to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, to make similar demands on Seoul.

The U.S. Embassy in Seoul denied the reports.

“Contrary to some press reports, the goal of the delegation is not to pressure the Korean government to immediately reopen the Korean market to American beef imports,” the Embassy said Monday in a press release.

Bomb along Kashmir highway wounds 21

SRINAGAR, India (AP)—Suspected Islamic rebels detonated a remote-controlled bomb as military vehicles passed on a key highway in Kashmir on Tuesday, wounding 20 soldiers and one civilian, an army officer said.

The bomb was hidden in a shop in the Lawapora village along the highway connecting Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, to the border town of Uri, Col. Bala Yadav told The Associated Press. The village is located 12 miles north of Srinagar, he said.

The explosion wounded 20 soldiers and one civilian woman, and damaged a bus carrying troops, an army jeep and two civilian vehicles, Yadav said.

Some of the wounded were in critical condition, Yadav said,

blaming Islamic militants who have been fighting Indian security forces since 1989 in an insurgency that has killed at least 65,000 people. The insurgents want the region’s independence from predominantly Hindu India, or its merger with Muslim Pakistan.

“The improvised explosive device must have been triggered by remote control to target the soldiers,” he said.

The Srinagar-Uri highway runs all the way to Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, and was until 1947 the lifeline of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

No cross-border traffic has been allowed since that year, when the state was divided between India and Pakistan and the two nations fought their first war.

ctsi

US kills 10, arrests 100 in Afghanistan

By STEPHEN GRAHAM
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—The U.S. military said Tuesday it killed 10 suspected rebels and captured more than 100 other people in a four-week old operation it has billed as the largest since the fall of the Taliban two years ago.

Two Afghan soldiers also were killed, while two Afghans and two coalition soldiers were injured in action during Operation Avalanche, which ended Monday after four weeks, a military spokesman said.

The operation involved more than 2,000 U.S. troops in an area of southern and eastern Afghanistan the size of California, though there were no major skirmishes. U.S. troops and soldiers from allied nations such as Romania carried out hundreds of patrols and searches, uncovering weapons caches and making arrests.

"Most important is what didn't happen," Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said at a news conference, citing the reopening of a key highway to the south that has been plagued by militant attacks and an apparent slowdown in attacks on aid workers. He gave no details on when the arrests were made or under what circumstances the rebel suspects were killed.

Still, the start of the operation was overshadowed by the deaths of 15 children in raids on suspected militants. In both cases, the chief suspect escaped.

Avalanche was also supposed to keep militants on the defensive during a historic constitutional convention, or loya jirga, which began in the capital, Kabul, more than two weeks ago.

So far, the gathering has gone ahead without any serious disruption.

Still, at least five rockets have been fired into the city, and on Sunday, four Afghan intelligence agents died in a blast as they attempted to arrest a suspected terrorist carrying explosives.

None of those incidents occurred near the convention, which is guarded

...as Afghans suspends vote on

By STEPHEN GRAHAM
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghan leaders suspended voting on the country's first post-Taliban constitution Tuesday after failing to close an ethnic split over issues from power-sharing to recognition for minorities.

Delegates to the grand council, or loya jirga, were dismissed and told to return Wednesday, leaving a core of powerful leaders to join U.N. and U.S. officials to seek a compromise among the country's fractious ethnic groups.

Before disappearing into the crisis talks, the council's embattled chairman, Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, appealed for calm—and suggested a deal could be reached in overnight talks.

"Sometimes our loya jirga gets so hot that the people catch fire, and sometimes it's so cold you need warmer clothes," he told the council gathered in a huge tent on a city college campus.

"God willing, tomorrow we will gather again and won't even need to vote or debate any more."

The 502-member council has spent more than two weeks debating and revising a 160-article draft supported by U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai.

Karzai appears to have rallied a clear majority for the strongly centralized presidential system laid out in the draft, mostly among his ethnic Pashtun kinsmen from the south of the country.

But representatives of the Northern Alliance faction, which helped U.S. forces throw out the Pashtun-dominated Taliban in late 2001, have put up stubborn resistance.

Critics including hardline Islamists who fought the Soviet occu-

pation in the 1980s and the civil war that followed, want a parliament strong enough to keep the president in check.



Afghan loya jirga, or grand council, delegates pray at the beginning of the session in Kabul, Afghanistan, Monday, Dec. 29, 2003. AP

But delegates close to Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik leader and former

president, called for a halt, claiming their demands were being ignored amid heavy-handed government lobbying.

U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, a regular presence at the jirga, later met with Mujaddedi, U.N. Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and other Afghan officials.

Many Pashtuns are confident they have a majority to turn the constitution back in Karzai's favor and impatient for a vote. "They just want to disrupt the whole process," said Omar Zakhilwal, a delegate from Kandahar, said of the opposition.

Others appealed for moderation to heal the wounds left by years of war.

"After 24 years of war, different people can have different ideas," said Mahmoud Shah Suleyman Khel, a Pashtun delegate from Paktia who said he decided to attend the loya jirga despite threats in his region by Taliban militants. "Everybody wants security and peace and stability. This is what is important to the people of Afghanistan."

fill shortfalls in equipment hampering the Afghan army from getting more involved in combat operations.

One killed in blast in RP's south

JOLO, Philippines (AP)—A powerful homemade bomb exploded Wednesday on the violent southern Philippine island of Jolo, killing one man, in a suspected attack by Muslim militants, officials said.

The 60-year-old man apparently found a plastic water jug containing the bomb along a road in Kasulitan village and placed it in his motorcycle taxi, where it exploded, killing him in a blast heard a few kilometers away, officials and witnesses said.

Rebels belonging to the Abu Sayyaf, a brutal Muslim group loosely linked by Philippine officials to the al-Qaida terror network, may have placed the bomb on the road to target army soldiers who pass by there, said Jolo military commander Col. Alexander Yapching.

An investigation was underway to determine whether the victim was an innocent villager or a rebel intending to plant the explosive somewhere else, Yapching said in a telephone interview.

He said the bomb attack, the

second in a week, may have been in retaliation for the capture earlier this month of Abu Sayyaf commander Ghalib Andang in Jolo, 940 kilometers (580 miles) south of Manila. Andang, who sustained gunshot wounds, is being detained in a military hospital in Manila.

Two homemade bombs were found near Jolo's airport on Friday. One exploded as soldiers attempted to defuse it, killing one and injuring another. The military also suspected that Abu Sayyaf guerrillas planted those bombs.

Philippine troops, backed by U.S. military logistical assistance, have been waging sporadic assaults on the ragtag guerrillas, believed to number several hundred. The rebels rose to international prominence when they sailed to neighboring Malaysia in 2000 and kidnapped 21 people, including 10 Western tourists.

They brought the hostages to their jungle camps in Jolo and eventually released them after payment of huge ransoms reportedly financed by Libya.

The new army took possession Tuesday of 24 new trucks donated by India, the first of 300 vehicles including jeeps and ambulances pledged by Delhi

Death toll now 36 in China fireworks blast

BEIJING (AP)—The death toll in an explosion at a fireworks factory in China's northeast has risen by seven to 36 and a businessman who set up the factory was ordered arrested, according to official media reports on Wednesday.

The factory in the city of Tieling had been operating for just three days when the explosion Tuesday tore apart its two workshops, the Xinhua News Agency said. The cause was under investigation.

Police ordered the arrest of Chen

N. Korea: Washington flew 180 spy flights in Dec.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea on Wednesday accused the U.S. military of conducting at least 180 flights to spy on the communist country in December and claimed that Washington was mapping out a surprise attack.

The U.S. military used U-2 spy planes and other reconnaissance aircraft for the flights, North Korea's official news agency KCNA reported.

On Dec. 29, an U-2 plane carried

last year.

Brig. Gen. Thomas Mancino, whose National Guard unit is leading the training, said the vehicles would

Haoyan, who set up the factory in August and lacked a production safety license, Xinhua said. It didn't say whether Chen owned the factory.

Another 44 people were hospitalized with injuries, 18 of them in serious condition, Xinhua said.

China's fireworks industry suffers hundreds of deaths every year in fires and explosions. The industry employs thousands of people, often in poor rural areas, who do much of the work by hand.

The death toll has soared this year despite repeated government promises

out aerial observations over the "whole area" of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the report claimed.

"Such aerial espionage fully shows that the U.S. imperialists are watching for a chance to make a surprise attack on the DPRK in a bid to stifle it by 'strength,'" KCNA said.

North Korea regularly makes such accusations. The U.S. military does not comment on North Korean claims about spy flights, although it acknowledges

monitoring the North's military activity.

Efforts are under way to continue talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The six-nation negotiations include the United States, Russia, China, Japan and the two Koreas. A first round ended in August with little progress made.

Washington keeps 37,000 troops stationed in South Korea as a deterrent against the North's 1.1-million-strong force—a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Flu outbreak worst in 30 years in West

By DANIEL Q. HANEY
AP MEDICAL EDITOR

The current flu outbreak is the worst for young U.S. children in years, several experts say, perhaps worse in Western states than the Hong Kong flu of 1968-69.

A government epidemiologist and other disease doctors predict flu deaths among babies and toddlers will exceed the estimated 92 who die in an average flu year.

“We would expect that number would be higher in a season like this. It would be more than 92,” said Dr. William Thompson of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “The question is

how high. We can’t estimate that from our data.”

Even so, flu deaths among children are still rare. An average of 8,400 normally healthy children between 6 months and 24 months are hospitalized with the flu each year. The virus and its complications are the sixth-leading killer of children age 4 and under.

With the flu now widespread across half the country, large hospitals have already admitted hundreds of young patients, including a few critically ill in intensive care. Nearly all eventually get better, but the deaths have been particularly worrisome.

“What I am hearing anecdotally is this is a very, very

bad season for children,” said Dr. Walt Orenstein, director of the National Immunization Program at the CDC.

So far, the CDC has learned of about three dozen deaths in children and teenagers. It is unclear how that figure compares to previous years because the agency doesn’t keep track of flu cases.

For the first season in four winters, the dominant flu strain is a so-called H3N2 virus, which is the most dangerous of the three main varieties of the bug. For that reason alone, experts say, the number of pediatric deaths will be higher than average.

The CDC estimates that in

an average year, about 36,000 people—including 92 children under age 4—die of the flu. However, the totals vary from year to year, depending on the strain that is circulating. Through the 1990s, the annual tally has ranged from 17,000 to 65,000. In a year when the more benign B-strain of flu dominates, just 24 deaths under age 4 are expected.

Flu can be a serious disease for the young because they have not built up much natural defense against the virus. Most older children and adults can fight off severe illness, even if they get sick, because previous infections have strengthened their immune systems.

This year may be especially

bad because many young children have never encountered an H3N2 virus. Making matters worse, this season’s virus is genetically different from the one that circulated in the late 1990s, so older children who had the flu then may not have very strong immunity.

Flu is most dangerous for youngsters who already have heart and lung problems, such

as asthma, cardiac birth defects and lung damage resulting from prematurity.

However, doctors said they are especially concerned by reports of flu deaths among children who are otherwise healthy. In Colorado, where the first child flu deaths appeared, state officials said that at least four of the 11 young flu fatalities had no underlying diseases.

Ex-governor indicted on corruption charges

CHICAGO (AP)—Former Gov. George Ryan, who gained a worldwide reputation as a critic of the death penalty, was indicted Wednesday on charges of taking payoffs in a corruption scandal that shadowed his entire four years in office and cut short his political career.

Prosecutors said the 69-year-old Republican and his family took cash, gifts, vacations and other favors to steer state business to friends and associates while he was governor and, before that, Illinois secretary of state.

“The charged conduct by former Gov. Ryan reflects a disturbing violation of trust,” U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Fitzgerald said. “Ryan is charged with betraying the citizens of Illinois for over a decade on state business, both large and small.”

Ryan did not immediately return a call for comment and no one answered the door at his home in Kankakee. Timothy Rooney, a partner of Ryan defense attorney Dan K. Webb, said a statement would be released later.

Ryan, who served as secretary of state from 1991 to 1999 and governor from 1999 to last January, has said he knew there was a culture of corruption in the secretary of state’s office but was unaware of the specifics.

He becomes the third Illinois governor indicted in the past 40 years.

Outside Illinois, Ryan is best known as an ardent critic of the way capital punishment is carried out. He declared a moratorium on executions in Illinois after it was discovered that 13 wrongfully convicted men had been sent to death row.

Last January, just before leaving office, he cleared out Illinois’ death row, pardoning four condemned prisoners and commuting the death sentences of 167 others to life in prison.

The scandal was a factor in his 2001 decision not to seek a second term, and his unpopularity was considered a major reason GOP candidates were routed statewide in the 2002 elections.

The five-year federal investigation initially focused on the selling of driver’s licenses for bribes at the secretary of state’s office, which oversees the motor vehicle agency. But the investigation was soon expanded to a range of corruption under Ryan, a glad-handing, baby-kissing politician from the old school.



Ryan

Elderly man may be charged in fatal crash

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP)—Police will ask the district attorney to file manslaughter charges against an 87-year-old man whose car roared through a farmer’s market in this beachfront city, killing 10 people and injuring 63.

The July 16 crash was the result of unsafe speed and other violations by Russell Weller, police Chief James T. Butts told reporters outside police headquarters Wednesday.

“We’re asking consideration of the district attorney’s office in seeking to file the charge of manslaughter,” Butts said.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Steve Cooley said his office has received the police department’s more than 900-page report and will make a decision after reviewing it. An assistant

prosecutor said he expected a decision to be made in a few weeks.

“The DA’s office had prosecutors present at the crime scene within the first few hours and has been reviewing reports and interviewing hundreds of witnesses since then,” Cooley said in a statement issued shortly before the news conference.

Weller’s attorney said his client shouldn’t face charges.

“We’re anxious to see the report because we’ve conducted our own extensive investigation and concluded this was a tragic, terrible accident,” attorney Jim Bianco said. “There was no intent to hurt anyone, no negligence and no crime.”

He added that Weller was heartbroken by what happened: “He suffers every minute of every day knowing that he was driving that car.”

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WTC tower design includes windmills

NEW YORK (AP)—Instead of the initially proposed “gardens in the sky,” the 1,776-foot Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center site will be topped by environmentally friendly windmills, people familiar with the latest plans for the building said Wednesday.

The building will have 70 floors of office space topped by broadcast antennas, wind turbines and cables resembling a suspension bridge.

The use of windmills in a tall building “is innovative and different and new and is something that will have to be designed carefully,” said Ashok Gupta, director of the air and energy program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, who has been advising redevelopment officials on environmental issues.

Neill Coleman, a spokes-

man for the New York State League of Conservation Voters, said, “We’re very excited about the idea of a renewable energy component to the design.”

Detailed plans for the tower, the first that will go up at the trade center site, will be released next week by Gov. George Pataki.

The design is a collaboration between Daniel Libeskind, who submitted the winning plan for redevelopment, and David Childs, the chief architect for leaseholder Larry Silverstein.

The New York Times reported Wednesday that the design would bear little resemblance to Libeskind’s original, asymmetrical structure. A source familiar with the plans, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press that the twisting, tapered building would still evoke the

Statue of Liberty across the harbor, as Libeskind envisioned.

When Libeskind presented his site plan one year ago, the occupied floors of the 1,776-foot tower were topped by “gardens in the sky.” The building has undergone many revisions since then and its precise shape is still being determined, the source said.

Negotiations between Childs and Libeskind have been contentious and are continuing.

Asked about the building Tuesday, Libeskind said, “in the end, I would attempt to make sure the Freedom Tower fits in the entire setting” of his original plan.

Matthew Higgins, chief operating officer of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp., said: “We’re excited by the progress on the building, but more work remains to be done.”

Police chief accused of misusing cash

BALTIMORE (AP)—Maryland’s police superintendent has been indicted on charges of spending charity money on extramarital affairs and personal trips while he was Baltimore’s police commissioner.

Indicted with Edward T. Norris was his former chief of staff at the Baltimore department, John Stendrini. They are accused of misusing more than \$20,000 between May 2000 and August 2002 from an account created from three Depression-era charity funds set up to benefit police officers.

“The defendants repeatedly used the funds as if it were their own ATM,” U.S. Attorney Thomas DiBiagio said Wednesday.

DiBiagio said the pair also used police officers to “transport female companions in connection with romantic encounters” between Norris and at least six women.

Norris, 43, is also accused of lying on a mortgage application to a municipal employees’ credit union.

His attorney, Andrew J.



Norris

Graham, did not respond to phone calls Wednesday seeking comment. Stendrini’s attorney, Michael Schatzow, was out of town and could not immediately be reached for comment, his office said.

Norris was the Baltimore police commissioner from May 2000 through 2002, when he left to join the Maryland State Police.

A spokesman for Gov. Robert Ehrlich, who hired Norris as state police superintendent, said the indictment was being reviewed. Asked if Norris had resigned or had been asked to resign, Massoni

said, “I can’t say.”

Norris said last summer that he would not step down from his job as superintendent even if he was indicted.

“Unless the governor asks me to leave, I’m not going,” Norris told The (Baltimore) Sun in July. “I haven’t done anything illegal. ... I’ll go to trial if it comes to that.”

Norris is charged with conspiracy to misapply funds, misapplication of funds and making a false statement in a mortgage application. Stendrini, 60, is charged with conspiracy to misapply funds, misapplication of funds and obstruction of justice.

If convicted of all charges, Norris would face a maximum sentence of 45 years. Stendrini would face a maximum sentence of 25 years.

More indictments could follow, DiBiagio said.

“The investigation is continuing, and this case is about more than Ed Norris,” DiBiagio said.

Norris and Stendrini were expected to surrender Thursday and make initial court appearances later that day.

Detroit terror case in danger of reversal

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Bush administration’s first major post-Sept. 11 prosecution, which broke up an al-Qaida cell in Detroit, is in danger of unraveling after the Justice Department divulged it had failed to turn over evidence that might have helped the defense.

The evidence includes a letter from an imprisoned drug gang leader who alleges the government’s key witness confided he made up some of his story.

The December 2001 letter, which could have been used by defense lawyers to challenge the prosecution witness during the trial this spring, wasn’t turned over until a couple of weeks ago.

The defendants are now

asking that their convictions be overturned, and the judge has scheduled an emergency hearing Friday to demand an explanation from the government.

“It has come to the attention of the court that the government has recently provided defendants with certain material that was not provided to defendants either prior to or during trial of this matter,” U.S. District Judge Gerald Rosen said in ordering the hearing.

Senior law enforcement officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday the Justice Department is concerned how the judge will rule and will acknowledge that its prosecutors erred.

Under the Supreme Court’s

Brady v. Maryland ruling, prosecutors are obligated to turn over all evidence that can be used to impeach the testimony of prosecution witnesses or to prove innocence.

The Justice Department will argue, however, that the jailhouse allegation that prosecution witness Youssef Hmimsa lied is not supported by the facts and that the convictions should be upheld, the officials said. The two prosecutors who handled the trial have been replaced.

The dramatic turnabout in a case that was one of the administration’s early successes in the war on terror is further complicated by discussions between Congress and the Justice Department over whether the lead trial prosecutor is entitled to

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World

Iran says US aid won't help relations

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON
AP WRITER

BAM, Iran (AP)—As survivors of Iran's earthquake scavenged for clothes and jostled for handouts Tuesday, President Mohammad Khatami thanked the United States for aid but played down talk that Washington's contribution would thaw frosty relations.

Khatami's remarks came after Secretary of State Colin Powell said he sees a "new attitude" in Iran that could lead to a restoration of ties between the United States and the Islamic republic that President Bush has called part of an "axis of evil."

"There are things happening, and therefore we should keep open the possibility of dialogue at an appropriate point in the future," Powell was quoted as saying in Tuesday's Washington Post.

Iranian leaders have agreed to permit unannounced inspections of the country's nuclear energy program and made overtures to moderate Arab governments. They also accepted an offer of U.S. humanitarian aid after last week's devastating magnitude-6.6 earthquake.

"All of those things taken together show, it seems to me, a new attitude in Iran in dealing with these issues - not one of total, open generosity, Powell said. "But they realize that the world is watching and the world is prepared to take action."

The quake death toll had reached 28,000 by Tuesday and was expected to rise, said the chief U.N. aid worker in the disaster zone around the ancient city of Bam, in Iran's southeast.

In the latest U.S. shipment, an American military plane carrying 80 personnel and medical supplies landed early Tuesday in the provincial capital of Kerman. The team reached Bam, 120 miles to the southeast, by midday. Seven U.S. Air Force C-130 cargo

planes have already delivered 150,000 pounds of relief supplies—including blankets, medical supplies and water—making the United States one of the largest international donors.

In Kerman, Khatami said the death toll was expected to top 30,000—roughly a third of the city's population. At least 12,000 people were injured. Downplaying higher figures, he said the death toll "definitely won't reach 40,000."

"Humanitarian issues should not be intertwined with deep and chronic political problems," Khatami said of any connection between American relief support and diplomatic ties. "If we see change both in tone and behavior of the U.S. administration, then a new situation will develop in our relations."

The United States and Iran have not had diplomatic relations since radical Islamists overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979, took Americans hostage and held them until January 1981.

Powell tempered his comments about the possibility of restored ties, adding that "we still have concerns about terrorist activities, of course, and there are other issues with respect to al-Qaida and other matters that we'll have to keep in mind."

Still, Russia's Foreign Ministry was quick to welcome Powell's remarks, saying it "may become a positive impulse for the movement toward the normalization of relations between these countries."

"In our view, this in turn could promote the strengthening of international security," ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said in a statement.

Along the ruined streets of Bam, crowds of people surrounded aid trucks. Women in black chadors, some carrying infants, scrambled for old clothes. Some young men tried to clamber onto a truck to help themselves but were pushed back.



An Iranian woman covers her face from the camera, as she sits in front of the covered bodies of her loved ones, who were killed in a massive earthquake that hit the ancient city of Bam about 1000 kilometers southeast of the capital Tehran, Iran, Saturday.

Others scavenged in search of their belongings. One man extracted a pair of trousers and a bottle of water from a pile of rocks where his house used to be.

With no new survivors pulled from the rubble, aid workers shifted their to treating the injured and homeless and burying the dead.

"We have gone out of the rescue phase and entered the humanitarian relief phase of the operation," said Ted Peran, the top U.N. relief worker. "There's always hope of pulling more survivors out ... but the window of opportunity is closing rapidly."

There were no reports of disease so far, with temperatures that drop to near-freezing at night making the risk of epidemic less than it would be in warmer weather, Peran said.

Friday's earthquake struck before sunrise, entombing thousands of sleeping residents in their homes. The city's mud-brick houses, constructed without supporting metal or wooden beams, crumbled into small chunks and powdery dust.

Bam's 2,000 year-old citadel, the world's largest medieval mud fortress, was largely destroyed by the quake. Khatami said a committee of foreign experts would determine how best to go about rebuilding it.

"We will rebuild the Bam citadel as the symbol of some 3,000 years of history in this part of Iran," said Khatami, adding that the U.N. cultural agency, UNESCO, had offered to help. UNESCO had considered declaring the citadel a protected World Heritage Site.

At Bam's cemetery, where thousands of quake victims have already been buried, workers dug 130-foot trenches to hold bodies wrapped in white shrouds. One woman pounded the ground with her fist.

"I was a good Muslim. I prayed to God all the time," said 44-year-old Alma Sepehr, sobbing beside a grave holding the remains of 21 relatives including her daughter, son and husband. "Why did this happen to us?"

Saudi terror suspect surrenders to police

By ADNAN MALIK
AP WRITER

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)—A terror suspect surrendered to Saudi police Tuesday, and a Western diplomat said Islamic militants who have attacked foreigners in the kingdom appear to have homed in on a new target—senior members of the Saudi security services.

The Islamic militant who turned himself in, Mansour Mohammed Ahmed Faqih, is 14th on an official list of 26 wanted terror suspects. His face was among those published in a newspaper advertisement in which the government offered rewards of \$270,000 for information leading to their arrests.

Biographical details on the 26 suspects, published earlier this month in government-guided newspapers, said Faqih, 22, went into hiding shortly after his 18-year-old brother Hassan Faqih was arrested in

connection with the suicide attacks of May 12.

The details said Ahmed Faqih and his elder brother Fahd Faqih sometimes led the prayers in their local mosque, and that Fahd was killed in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

The official Saudi Press Agency, which reported the surrender, quoted an unidentified Interior Ministry official as saying "initiatives that indicate a serious desire to return to the path of righteousness will be appreciated."

Saudi authorities have detained hundreds of people in a crackdown on alleged militants and urged wanted persons to surrender. Increasingly, the militants are targeting the men who are hunting them, according to the diplomat.

An explosion Monday in Riyadh was aimed at a top official of the Interior Ministry's Mabathith branch, the Saudi equivalent of the FBI, the diplomat said, speaking on condition

of anonymity.

Saudi Interior Ministry officials could not be reached for comment Tuesday about the incident, but police have told The Associated Press that a car sped by the official's parked vehicle and a passenger tossed something toward it, causing an explosion. Nobody was hurt by the blast.

The diplomat suggested Monday's attack—and a similar strike on a top security officer earlier this month—could be a "replacement or a parallel strategy" to the suicide bombings aimed at foreign workers and their families that have been the militants' main tactic.

In the earlier incident, the diplomat said, assailants tried to kill the kingdom's top counterterrorism official, Maj. Gen. Abdulaziz al-Huweirini. The diplomat declined to say more about the strike at al-Huweirini, which has not been reported in the Saudi media.

Bomb explodes in Baghdad area

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—A roadside bomb that was apparently intended for a passing U.S. military convoy missed its target Tuesday, exploding in a densely populated Baghdad neighborhood and killing an Iraqi civilian.

The attack in the Karrada neighborhood shattered windows on the busy street and destroyed a concrete road median, but did not wound any U.S. troops.

"They've not killed any Americans, just Iraqis as usual," said Karim Abbas, a shopkeeper. "We consider it terrorism."

Bystanders said the Iraqi who died had worked in a nearby shop.

Roadside bombs have become the preferred weapon of anti-American guerrillas who generally lack the firepower of troops of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq.

In Baghdad, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said U.S. forces

had detained a total of 101 suspected opponents of the U.S.-led coalition in the past 24 hours.

Earlier Tuesday, U.S. troops said they detained three former army officers suspected of conducting anti-American attacks. During the raid in Baqouba, northeast of Baghdad, the American soldiers blew up the entrance to a house.

"We had a report of a terrorist cell which has been conducting terrorist attacks on coalition forces," Sgt. 1st Class David Wicklund told Associated Press Television News. "We came here in the early morning hours and caught them while they were sleeping."

The men appeared to be midlevel officials of the former regime. The highest ranking official was a major.

Kimmitt said the number of engagements between coalition forces and insurgents have stayed "relatively the same" since the Dec. 13 capture of Saddam Hussein.

France, Mexico put armed guards in flight

By ELAINE GANLEY
AP WRITER

PARIS (AP)—Members of France’s elite intervention squad are already riding undercover on some trans-Atlantic flights, while a continent away, Mexican security agents also began boarding planes before a new U.S. directive to foil foreign terrorists.

Many airlines around the world have said they would cooperate with the U.S. order announced Monday to put armed law enforcement officers on certain international flights as part of a heightened terror alert. Some others say they have used armed marshals since shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

With fears of terror rising this holiday season, France and Mexico were among nations quick to bolster security.

There are doubters.

The International Air Transport Association, an industry group of 275 international air companies, joined a chorus of professionals who would prefer more prevention on the ground rather than a potential shoot-up in a high-flying aircraft.

Thailand’s Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said there was no need for armed guards on Thai Airways flights to prevent terrorist attacks. “We have a system of checking at the departure point already,” he told reporters.

Finland’s national carrier Finnair said flatly that it would rather ground its aircraft than put armed marshals on board.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge on Tuesday hailed the response of other nations. “I’d put the family on the plane,” Ridges said when asked about how strongly he felt about new safety measures the Bush administration has undertaken.

Under Ridge’s new directive, the government would have the option of denying access to U.S. airspace to airlines unless they put an armed officer on flights crossing over or headed to



Los Angeles Airport Police Officer Robert Corchado with his K-9 “Rody” inspect baggage of passengers Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2003, in Los Angeles. Three Paris-Los Angeles commercial flights were canceled due to security concerns, the Interior Ministry said Wednesday. The U.S. Embassy in Paris asked the government to cancel the Air France flights “for security reasons,” a ministry

Mexico said Tuesday it reached an early agreement with Washington and has had security agents on board some flights since last week. The agents carry weapons with special ammunition designed to avoid loss of pressure in the aircraft cabin if fired, said Public Safety Secretary Alejandro Gertz.

France, always keen to dictate its own policy, has made no official announcement about compliance with the U.S. directive. However, special teams have been aboard some Air France flights reportedly for the past week.

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, speaking during a visit to Cairo, confirmed that France has stepped up security, but refused to reveal “either the modalities or the timing of this strategy of reinforcement.”

is so large and diffuse that we cannot compromise,” said Foreign Ministry spokesman Herve Ladsous. “So the obligation to cooperate is absolutely clear in the eyes of all countries concerned by this threat.”

According to an official close to the situation, teams from an air security unit are aboard some Air France flights to the United States.

They are armed with specially adapted weapons “so as not to put lives in peril ... or the integrity of the aircraft,” the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The newspaper Liberation reported Tuesday that two to six members of the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group have been traveling on certain flights since Dec. 23, armed with elec-

A French delegation that included intelligence agents met on Monday in Washington with Ridge and CIA and FBI officials to discuss counter-terrorism and international flight security.

Cooperation with the United States is “exemplary,” but matters like the extent of the U.S. program and risk evaluation remained under discussion with Washington, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Air France canceled six flights between Paris and Los Angeles over Christmas, after security discussions between U.S. and French officials. France’s flag carrier has said only that unarmed security agents had been aboard “flights judged to be sensitive” since the Sept. 11, 2001,

terror attacks on New York and Washington.

Germany’s Lufthansa and Transport Canada are among airlines that say they have carried sky marshals on some flights since shortly after the 2001 attacks by the al-Qaida network.

Air Canada said it was complying with the U.S. request for armed officers on board certain flights.

Russia’s aviation authorities said there had been no government decision on whether to comply with Washington’s demand.

The Swedish aviation authority wants to avoid weapons onboard flights if possible, said Eva Axne.

Britain has said it would deploy sky marshals “where appropriate,” but pilots have expressed strong reservations about the plan.

Britain’s airline pilots’ association called Tuesday for an emergency world summit of airline pilots to consider the U.S. demand for sky marshals.

“Our advice to pilots is that until adequate written and agreed assurances are received, flight crew should not operate flights where sky marshals are carried,” said the group’s chairman, Mervyn Grandshaw.

Many of those opposed to the U.S. directive want the emphasis placed on nabbing terrorists on the ground.

IATA said that “aside from specific, identified threats, the international airline industry continues to believe that security resources are best allocated to ensure that threats do not get on board the aircraft.”

Eric Lahon, of France’s Alter pilot union, said armed marshals aboard a plane amount to an admission of lapsed security.

“To imagine that we’re going to solve a terrorism problem by putting cowboys on board planes is to admit that we failed at all security measures on the ground,” he said.

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Nuke agency rejects US help in Libya

By **GEORGE JAHN**
AP WRITER

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—The U.N. nuclear agency does not need American help in dismantling Libya's nascent weapons program, the agency chief told The Associated Press on Tuesday, echoing differences with Washington over Iraq and Iran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is happy to receive U.S. and British intelligence that will assist its inspectors in Libya, said Director General Mohamed ElBaradei.

But the IAEA doesn't want help on the ground.

"I am not familiar with anything they plan to do on a bilateral basis," ElBaradei said in an interview when asked about U.S. plans to police and scrap Libya's covert nuclear program. "As far as I'm concerned, we have the mandate, and we intend to do it alone."

The Bush administration is convinced Libya's nuclear program was far more extensive than assumed by the Vienna-based IAEA. In response, Washington has decided to send its own inspectors and British technical experts to Libya to help survey and dismantle its weapons programs.

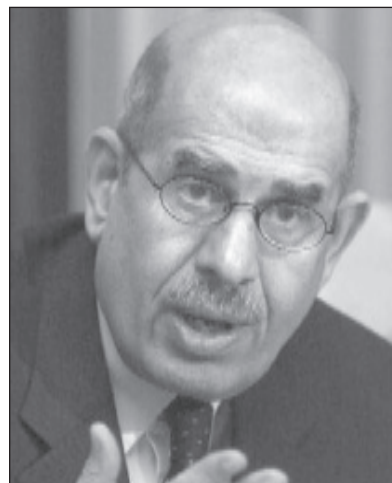
ElBaradei spoke to AP a day after returning from a visit to Libya, where he and an IAEA team visited four once-secret nuclear sites in the capital, Tripoli. They said that, from what they saw, Libya was still years away from developing nuclear weapons.

During the trip, ElBaradei met with Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who assured the IAEA chief that Libya would cooperate fully with inspections and eliminate its long-secret nuclear program, saying he wanted to turn Libya into a "mainstream" nation, IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke with ElBaradei before and after his visit to Libya.

"It's going to take time before we can draw final conclusions about the Libyan program," Ereli said, adding that the Bush administration is planning to work with the IAEA to determine the nature of Libya's weapons activities.

Another official said U.S. weapons experts are expected to consult with Libyan experts about the program



ElBaradei

either in Libya or a third country in early 2004. No dates have been set.

The White House and ElBaradei's agency have also had tensions during the past year over the extent of the nuclear weapons threat in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and in Iran.

The Americans invaded Iraq arguing that Saddam was trying to make nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. ElBaradei maintains that what his teams saw in the months preceding the war suggested the Iraqis were in no position to build a nuclear weapon. So far, after eight months of U.S. control over Iraq, no such weapons have been found.

American officials also rankled at ElBaradei's assessment in November that IAEA inspectors had found "no evidence" of an arms program in Iran, though they noted suspicious findings and criticized Tehran for hiding part of its nuclear program for years. The United States asserts that uranium enrichment and other Iranian activities point to attempts to make nuclear weapons.

Justifying the joint U.S.-British plans in Libya, a senior Bush administration official pointed to ElBaradei's visiting of only four nuclear sites. CIA and British intelligence have concluded there are 11 such sites, said the official, who asked for anonymity.

But ElBaradei said Tuesday he made no suggestion that Libya had only four nuclear-related sites. "I think I made it very clear that our assessment was based and what we have been told and what we have seen," he said. "We're not saying, 'This is it, guys.'"

A diplomat familiar with the IAEA's information said the agency believes there are around 10 nuclear sites in Libya, mostly warehoused centrifuge and conversion equipment acquired—but never used—for full programs of uranium enrichment.

Indirectly contradicting U.S. assertions of an extensive program, ElBaradei said that what he has seen suggests Libya did not go beyond "low-level, small-scale" testing of enrichment equipment.

ElBaradei described the equipment he saw as, "nothing really special," calling them, "components which had not been assembled.... mothballed and in containers."

"It was much more modest in comparison with the Iranian program, which is much more ambitious, large-scale industrial production" of enriching uranium, he said.

Suspicious about Iran's nuclear activities prompted ElBaradei to tour Iran's nuclear facilities last February, including an incomplete plant in Natanz, nearly 300 miles south of Tehran. Diplomats said he was taken aback by the advanced stage of a project using thousands of centrifuges to enrich uranium.

Iran insists its program aims only to produce energy and signed an agreement in December allowing snap IAEA inspections of its facilities.

The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Libya seemed to possess far fewer centrifuges than Iran. While a few dozen were assembled, most were still in their original shipping crates and lined up along warehouse walls, as were crated uranium conversion units that were opened only for the visiting IAEA team, he said.

Libyan nuclear scientists interviewed by the IAEA team "swore up and down they never had any weapons activities," said the diplomat. "They said they were never told to develop a weapon, they were only told to develop enrichment capability."

Gadhafi's recently acknowledged that Libya had been seeking nuclear weapons and his decision to renounce them—made after months of secret negotiations with the United States and Britain—came as a surprise to the IAEA, the U.N. body charged with keeping watch on nuclear programs.



German police officers block off a road leading to a German military hospital in Hamburg, northern Germany, Tuesday Dec. 30, 2003.

Germany warned on possible terror strike

By **MANFRED ROLFSMEIER**
AP WRITER

HAMBURG, Germany (AP)—Police closed streets around a military hospital Tuesday after U.S. authorities warned that Islamic militants planned suicide car bomb attacks against the facility.

The intelligence warning from the United States named two alleged suicide attackers from Ansar al-Islam, a group linked to al-Qaida that planned to carry out the attack on the Bundeswehr hospital, said state Interior Minister Dirk Nockemann.

The alleged suicide attackers traveled to Hamburg in early December, said Heino Vahldiek, head of the Hamburg branch of federal security agency.

Police closed streets about 2:30 p.m. around the hospital in the suburb of Wandsbek.

U.S. officials believe Ansar al-Islam, a group based in northern Iraq, has links to al-Qaida. It is suspected of recruiting holy warriors in Europe for suicide missions in Iraq.

The northern German city of Hamburg was the base for an al-Qaida cell that included three of the Sept. 11 attackers.

The U.S. Embassy in Berlin refused to comment on the reported

threat Tuesday.

Police said that after several hours of searching the area around the hospital they found nothing suspicious and made no arrests.

Nockemann described the information about the planned attack as vague, and said there were also threats against U.S. military installations in the Frankfurt area. But the U.S. Air Force Europe said they had received no notification of a terrorist threat.

At the nearby Wandsbek-Gartenstadt subway station, officers with submachine-guns and bulletproof vests checked the identity cards of residents trying to reach their homes.

The area around the clinic swarmed with police officers, who had dozens of vehicles at the scene.

In November, Hamburg police acting on an Italian warrant arrested Algerian Abderrazak Mahdjoub, the alleged leader of a ring suspected of seeking recruits for a training camp run by Ansar al-Islam.

Italian investigators have said Mahdjoub had contacts with two key Ansar al-Islam suspects arrested during raids in Italy in March and April.

Canada: Widen mad cow case probe factors

By **TARA BRAUTIGAM**
AP WRITER

TORONTO (AP)—Canadian officials downplayed the significance of the origins of a Holstein infected with mad cow disease, saying Monday other factors need examination before concluding a Canadian farm was the source.

Canada's minister of agriculture said finding the source of the animals feed was also important.

"Finding out where the cow came from is only one aspect. It's equally important to find out in fact where the feed came from that gave the cow BSE and also particularly where that cow contracted it," said Agriculture Minister Bob Speller at a press conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

He also said it was essential to

ensure proper tagging and slaughterhouse procedures were followed, and that Canada and the United States have begun separate DNA tests, but did not know when results could be expected.

The remarks were his first since the U.S. Agriculture Department announced Saturday it believed the sick cow found in Washington came from a farm north of Edmonton, Alberta.

On Monday, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein urged countries to resist "worldwide panic" and lift their bans on U.S. and Canadian beef due to the minimal risk of contracting bovine spongiform encephalopathy from one cow.

He added that the USDA's announcement angered him because the North American beef market was too

integrated for that distinction to matter.

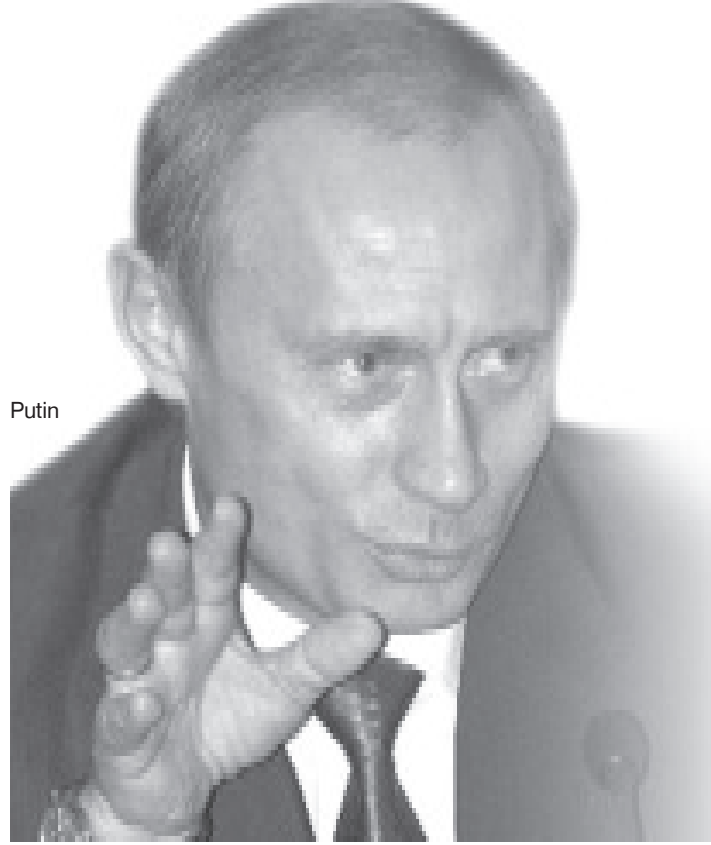
"An American bull sniffing a Canadian cow doesn't ask for that cow's national identity," he told reporters in Calgary, Alberta.

"I was frustrated to see that there was premature fingerpointing."

Canada's beef industry, particularly Alberta's with more than half of the country's 13.5 million cattle, suffered a huge blow after the discovery in May of a Black Angus cow infected with mad cow disease. Producers lost \$1.45 billion in exports so far, according to the Canada Beef Exporter Federation.

Mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, is a concern because humans who eat brain or spinal matter from an infected cow can develop variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Putin presses for better living standards



Putin

By JIM HEINTZ
AP WRITER

MOSCOW (AP)—President Vladimir Putin told the first parliament controlled by his supporters that it should serve as a model of democracy and improve Russian living standards.

Putin also exhorted the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, to reform education and the health system, and help provide more affordable housing by encouraging the development of Russia's embryonic mortgage system.

United Russia, a party that strongly supports Putin, won control of the legislature earlier this month, a vote driven in part by significant economic gains made during Putin's four years in power.

But critics of the election, including the U.S. government and the Organization for Secu-

rity and Cooperation in Europe, have also claimed that United Russia also benefited from state media coverage biased in its favor.

The new Duma should show "dedication to the principles of democracy," Putin said in his speech at the start of the first legislative session.

"The parliament's work to strengthen all the democratic institutions is extremely important," he said.

The president emphasized that the Duma "must work in the interests of the country's citizens and achieve visible, tangible progress in the improvement of their lives."

Later Monday, the legislators voted 352-15, with four abstentions, to elect Boris Gryzlov, the leader of United Russia, to be the chamber's speaker for the next four years.

Gryzlov resigned from

the post of interior minister last week to take his seat in the Duma.

Lawmakers then elected 10 deputy speakers, seven of them members of United Russia.

Nikolai Kharitonov, a lawmaker nominated by the Communist Party to be its presidential candidate, said that the new Duma would be even more obedient to the presidential administration than its predecessor, which never stood up to the Kremlin.

"It will be a rubber stamp for the Kremlin," Kharitonov said Sunday.

United Russia has 300 seats in the 450-seat Duma—a majority that gives it enough votes to adopt legislation on its own or to amend the constitution.

Some Putin supporters have proposed an amendment that would allow the president to extend his time in office beyond

the limit of two four-year terms. He is widely expected to win a second term in the March 14 presidential election.

The populist-nationalist Homeland Party and Vladimir Zhirinovsky's nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party each have 36 seats, and both are expected to back the Kremlin.

"We have an absolute popular-patriotic majority in this Duma," Homeland's Sergei Baburin told the house on Monday.

The Communists have found themselves in a narrow minority with 52 seats. The Duma has 23 independents and three seats are vacant.

The two top liberal parties, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces, which occasionally challenged the Kremlin in the past, failed to clear the legal threshold of at least five percent of the Dec. 7 vote to be represented in the Duma.

Portugal indicts 10 in sex abuse case

By BARRY HATTON
AP WRITER

LISBON, Portugal (AP)—A yearlong investigation. A case file 13,000 pages long. Televised testimony by boys describing rapes by adults in dark cellars. And at last: 10 high-level indictments in an alleged pedophile-ring run from a state children's home—a scandal that has rocked Portugal's trust in its authorities.

Among those indicted Monday were two popular television personalities, a lawmaker and a retired ambassador. Prosecutors did not publicly detail their alleged crimes, and the sealed indictments threw little light on the intricacies of the case.

Still, the charges may soothe the public clamor for action, which has only grown since a whistleblower broke the scandal last November. Since then, former officials have said abuse at the home stretched back to the mid-1970s but authorities did

nothing to stop it, sparking suspicion of a high-level cover-up.

Prime Minister Jose Durao Barroso vowed Tuesday that magistrates would not flinch from their prosecution in a case that already has undermined the public trust. Wiretaps of questionable legality, constant leaks to the press and missing police records have sharpened the sense of uncertainty.

"The Portuguese people want justice to be done. So do I," Durao Barroso said. "As prime minister, I have complete confidence in the Portuguese legal system."

Nine men and one woman were charged Monday with sexually abusing minors and adolescents, rape and organizing a pedophile ring at the Casa Pia home. No trial date has been set.

Among those indicted are Herman Jose, a celebrated comic and host of a Sunday night talk show; Carlos Cruz, a former talk show and quiz show host; Paulo Pedroso, a lawmaker and spokesman for the main opposition Socialist Party until he be-

came embroiled in the scandal earlier this year; and retired ambassador Jorge Ritto.

In the only other indictment, a longtime male employee at the home, Carlos Silvino, 46, went on trial in October on charges of sexually abusing four boys. Monday's indictment reportedly leveled a further 662 charges of sexual abuse of children at Silvino, who is also suspected of running the alleged pedophile ring.

Since the case emerged, police have questioned about 600 people. Counselors who interviewed children at the home say more than 100 boys may have been abused.

Adolescents, their faces blacked out and their voices altered, have gone on television to describe rape by adults in dark cellars and nighttime car journeys to secluded houses used by the alleged sex ring.

Other victims, now adults, have come forward with stories they previously were ashamed to tell.

Syria pushes for a 'nuke-free Mideast'

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Building on Iranian and Libyan moves toward disarmament, Syria on Monday pushed for a Security Council resolution to make the Middle East a nuclear weapon-free zone.

But diplomats said the council was deeply divided over the wisdom of taking up Syria's request, which was generally perceived as aimed at Israel, long suspected of having a nuclear arsenal.

In closed-door consultations Monday, only six of the 15 council members spoke in support of the proposed resolution, three short of the nine needed to pass it. Pakistan, a council member from South Asia with its own nuclear weapons, had reservations about it, Syrian Ambassador Fayssal Mekdad said.

Council members France, Britain, Germany, Bulgaria and the United States also had reservations, said a diplomat who attended the discussions and declined to be named.

The diplomat said Syria

urged the council to take steps to require Israel to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction. Other council members said a resolution would be pointless if the United States did not exert pressure on Israel to cooperate.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said that "as an overall objective, we would like to see a region free of weapons of mass destruction."

But Ereli distanced the State Department from the Syrian move, suggesting the resolution was intended just to score political points against Israel, Syria's rival.

Israel has never confirmed or denied whether it has nuclear weapons. But earlier this month, Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the Israeli daily Haaretz: "We work on the assumption that Israel has nuclear capability."

Since the General Assembly has already adopted a "nuclear-free Mideast" resolution, the diplomat said, many coun-

tries felt it was better not to undermine that measure and to shelve the proposed Security Council resolution rather than force it to a vote of defeat or a divisive result.

The draft resolution would involve the Security Council "in adopting a global approach to countering the spread of all weapons of mass destruction in the countries of the Middle East without exception."

It would also urge Middle Eastern countries to adopt the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and other accords banning the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons.

The draft before the council is the first to call for all countries in the Middle East to adhere to all the relevant treaties.

The Bush administration recently accused Syria of possessing chemical weapons—an allegation Damascus denied. Syria is a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but not the chemical or biological weapons conventions.

Brazil asked to allow spot nuke checks

By STAN LEHMAN
AP WRITER

SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP)—Despite Brazil's assurances that its nuclear facilities are open to spot inspections, the International Atomic Energy Agency on Tuesday said South America's largest country has still not signed a key agreement that would formally allow such inspections to take place.

The remarks by IAEA spokeswoman Melissa Fleming in Vienna came a day after Brazil's Science and Technology Ministry released a statement reaffirming the "peaceful objectives" of the country's nu-

clear program, its commitment to safeguard agreements signed with Argentina and the IAEA and its commitment to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which Brazil signed in 1997.

"As a consequence of these commitments ... all of Brazil's nuclear materials and facilities ... are inspected on a regular and unrestricted basis and subject to unannounced inspections," the statement said.

But Brazil is not on the IAEA's Dec. 18 list of nations that have signed the so-called additional protocol of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that authorizes spot inspec-

tions.

"The IAEA encourages Brazil, as it does all countries with sophisticated nuclear fuel cycles, to sign and bring into force the Additional Protocol, to provide the Agency with the additional authority it requires in order to provide the necessary peaceful use assurances," Fleming said.

Brazil is preparing to begin enriching uranium by the middle of 2004. The uranium, to be enriched at a plant in Rio de Janeiro state, will be used as fuel for the country's two nuclear plants, the government says.

Enriching uranium is a process by which the heavy

mpla

Iraq arms hunt may hinder other US aims

By DAFNA LINZER
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—In nine months, not a single item has been found in Iraq from a long and classified intelligence list of weapons of mass destruction which guided the work of dozens of elite teams from Special Forces, the military, the CIA and the Pentagon during the most secretive, expensive and fruitless weapons hunt in history.

For U.S. allies, arms control experts and some involved in the hunt, the lack of evidence in a war premised on the threat of proliferation will have far reaching consequences in the coming year for the United States in its efforts to curb Iran, North Korea, Syria and others.

While some argue the Iraq war helped push open the doors of closed regimes such as Libya and Iran, others say it has only strengthened convictions that negotiations, U.N. inspections and sanctions work.

A look at new details of Iraq's clandestine efforts and its behavior during the 13 years when it was supposed to disarm could serve as a lesson for future moves against any potential proliferator.

The American-led effort has shed new light on Iraqi expertise, some of which was unknown to U.N. inspectors and hasn't been made public before.

In one case, Iraqis used front companies to import German and Russian-made missile parts between 1999-2002, the period when they banned U.N. inspectors from the country. They later lied to inspectors and said some of the parts were acquired inside Iraq.

"We didn't accept the sanctions then," Dr. Modher Sadeq-Saba al-Tamimi, Iraq's top missile designer, told The Associated Press. "From 1999-2002 we bought German and Russian parts," for the al-Samoud

missiles which were later destroyed by returning U.N. inspectors because several tests flights showed a capability to go beyond a 93-mile U.N. limit.

The purchases, often done through a web of middlemen and front companies, were investigated by the U.N. but such Iraqi imports wouldn't be considered a violation. American investigators are still sifting through documents.

Modher is free and has shared his work with British military personnel. Ever ambitious and talented, he told AP in two separate interviews that he and his teams dreamed up ingenious designs for long-range missiles which he hoped to work on once sanctions were lifted.

That information, which also wouldn't be considered a violation by U.N. inspectors, constitutes the bulk of what the America-led search has learned in the missile area.

The teams have closed their chemical and nuclear files and David Kay, the man currently leading the search, is considering stepping down, those involved in the hunt told AP on condition of anonymity.

The remaining hope for the operation is in the biological area, a field U.N. inspectors were all suspicious of. Kay's teams have found no evidence Iraq had smallpox but has continued questioning Iraqi biologists and were pursuing information about anthrax and aflatoxin.

Of the handful of Iraqi weapons scientists remaining in U.S. custody, two are missile experts, and seven worked on past biological programs, according to Iraqi officials now working for the American occupation.

All continue to claim that Iraq hasn't worked on weapons of mass destruction for years.

Modher said he gave his word to Saddam that the al-Samoud missiles were designed to conform with U.N. regulations and his staff signed of-

Daily US military deaths in Iraq

As of Tuesday, Dec. 30, 478 U.S. service members have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq, according to the Department of Defense. Of those, 327 died as a result of hostile action and 151 died of non-hostile causes, the department said.

The British military has reported 52 deaths; Italy, 17; Spain, eight; Bulgaria, five; Thailand, two; Denmark, Ukraine and Poland have reported one each.

On or since May 1, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 340 U.S. soldiers have died - 212 as a result of hostile action and 128 of non-hostile causes, according to ficial letters forswearing proscribed activities.

On Feb. 20, one month before the U.S. attacked, Modher met with Saddam, his sons and five other men responsible for Iraq's air defenses to discuss the coming war. "We talked about the preparations," Modher had designed anti-aircraft missiles "but they were never fired because nobody fought," he said.

There was no mention in the meeting of other defense systems, such as chemical or biological weapons, Modher recalled.

To date, Congress has approved \$700 million for the weapons hunt, according to Congressional staff, a figure higher than previously reported. The U.N. effort during the 1990s cost an estimated \$60 million a year, which was paid by several countries and the United Nations.

The Bush administration began planning its own hunt six months before it went to war, military officers said.

Working in secret, the Pentagon set up the first U.S. teams designed to

the Defense Department's figures.

Since the start of military operations, 2,379 U.S. service members have been injured as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department's figures. Non-hostile injured numbered 372.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The latest deaths reported by the military: No new deaths reported.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The latest identifications reported by the Department of Defense: Army Capt. Ernesto M. Blanco, 28, Texas; killed Sunday in Qaryat Ash Shababi by an explosive; assigned to 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne

search for, identify and destroy chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. The mission, which military planners expected to be brief, was a failure and in June the Pentagon announced a larger operation with investigative capabilities to be led by Kay and Gen. Keith Dayton.

By August the operation, known as the Iraq Survey Group, was underway. Its most notable determination to date has been that two mobile trailers found in April and May were not biological laboratories as senior administration officials had claimed. In a BBC interview Kay called the trailers "a fiasco."

His first order of business was to throw out a U.S. intelligence list which inaccurately identified locations of chemical weapons, stores of highly enriched uranium and laboratories for anthrax and smallpox. He told team members that working off lists had been a mistake.

Instead, he ran the hunt as an investigation, the way the United Nations had done when he briefly worked for them in Iraq in 1991.

Under Kay's direction, hundreds of Iraqis were interviewed, some were detained, no one has been charged. University science professors said ISG staff still come by once a week to poke around and ask questions.

At first, some ISG members identified themselves as journalists or academics interested in working on joint research projects, according to university staff and administrators. Dr. Modher said the ISG team that interviewed him in November said the meeting would be about privatizing his missile factory.

The CIA declined to comment on ISG activities or methods. It wouldn't release spending figures for the operation and Kay turned down a request for an interview. His interim report remains classified.

By contrast, the U.N. teams were required to file public reports every three months. Their major findings and expenses, later by Iraqi oil proceeds, were public as well.

Since the war was launched, American allies and U.N. Security Council members have talked of bolstering the work of U.N. inspectors and have used negotiations with Iran and North Korea as a way of reducing the threats those country could pose.

The United States tried a different route, pushing to rebuke both Iran and North Korea's nuclear activities in the Security Council but found no support for the moves.

"As long as the United States has a pre-emptive policy on the books, no one will pass sanctions against Iran or North Korea," said Hans Blix, the former chief U.N. inspector who will head a new nonproliferation center based in Stockholm.

That may be true, said William Kristol, editor of the conservative Weekly Standard magazine, but he said the sudden attention paid to the issue of weapons of mass destruction is a tribute to the war.

A United Nations weapons inspector walks inside a missile facility where components for Al Samoud missiles are produced near Karbala, Iraq as smoke from burning oil drums rises in the background in this Feb. 23, 2003 file photo.

AP

Canada court keeps marijuana illegal

By **TARA BRAUTIGAM**
AP WRITER

TORONTO (AP)—Canada's supreme court upheld the country's current laws against marijuana possession, even as Prime Minister Paul Martin presses to eliminate jail sentences for people caught with small amounts of the drug.

In a 6-3 decision, the justices ruled that possession of marijuana would remain a criminal offense for now. In a separate, unanimous decision, it maintained trafficking of the drug was illegal.

The ruling does not preclude Martin from going ahead with a proposed bill that would soften penalties. President Bush has expressed concerns over the bill, fearing it could encourage drug smuggling along the border.

The court ruling prompted praise from law enforcement groups but disappointment from proponents of marijuana legalization.

"My huge patriotism may slowly be dissipating. I have

a lot of faith in my country, in freedom and justice, but it doesn't seem like we have a whole lot of that left," said Dominic Kramer, a marijuana activist who runs a store that sells hemp products and paraphernalia in Toronto.

Tony Cannavino, president of the Canadian Police Association, welcomed the decision but expressed concern over Martin's intent to pursue the controversial bill. He said marijuana growing seemed to be on the rise.

"We have more and more 'grow ops' across the country," he told reporters in Ottawa. "You wouldn't see that 10 years ago."

A key question in the Supreme Court decision was whether Parliament has the constitutional right to punish marijuana possession, given the lack of proven serious harms from its use.

The high court examined three cases involving two pot activists and one man who was caught smoking. All three failed to persuade lower courts



David Malmo-Levine smokes a joint while awaiting the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on marijuana possession at the headquarters of the B.C. Marijuana Party in Vancouver Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2003. AP

that the pot law is unconstitutional.

Defendant David Malmo-Levine took a hit of hash last May before arguing his case in person at the high court while dressed head-to-toe in

clothes made of hemp cloth. He once ran the Harm Reduction Club, a non-profit cooperative in Vancouver that offered advice on safe marijuana use while supplying it to some 1,800 members.

Another case centered on Christopher Clay, who ran the Hemp Nation in London, Ontario, a store he started with a government loan. He sold marijuana seeds and seedlings in a deliberate challenge to the law.

Alan Young, lawyer for Clay, said his initial disappointment shifted to anger after leafing through the lengthy decision.

"There's so much smoke and mirrors in this," he said. "This issue has been a political hot potato that has bounced between Parliament and the courts for the past decade."

Last week Martin said he planned to reintroduce a bill, first proposed under former Prime Minister Jean Chretien, that would wipe out potential jail time and criminal records for those convicted of marijuana possession.

The bill did not legalize the drug, and maintained or increased already stiff penalties for large-scale growers and traffickers. It made possession of less than 15 grams of pot a minor offense punishable by fines of \$100 to \$400, much like traffic tickets.

Critics said 15 grams, the equivalent of roughly 15 to 20 joints, was too much to equate with casual use.

US Embassy in Bahrain warns of attack

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—The U.S. Embassy in Bahrain said Tuesday it has received information about a possible terrorist attack in the Persian Gulf country during the holiday season.

In a written statement, it urged Americans to avoid places where Westerners congregate and to reduce unnecessary travel. It said they should maintain an unpredictable daily schedule and vary their travel routes.

An embassy spokeswoman declined to comment on any changes to the mission's own security following the warning.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the embassy in Bahrain "thought it was prudent at this time to put out a general announcement to the American community since that's where this particular threat is centered, that alerted them to the possibility of attacks there."

The warning comes as the United States tightens security because of fears of terrorism over Christmas and the New Year holiday. On Sunday, the U.S. security level was raised to orange, which is "high" alert, from yellow, or "elevated."

The Bahrain warning is in effect until Jan. 2, the embassy said. It said U.S. officials were seeking more information on the terrorism threat.

Russia sending only professional troops

MOSCOW (AP)—Starting next year Russia will send only professional troops to Chechnya instead of draftees, the defense minister said Tuesday as he inspected the country's first all-volunteer division.

Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the 76th Airborne that as the first unit to fully switch from conscripts it would serve as a model for

the rest of the military.

"It has helped us obtain a lot of experience that we can later use in staffing other military units with contract servicemen," the Interfax news agency quoted Ivanov as saying as he visited the division's base in Pskov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made reforming the underfunded and demoralized military his top priority. But

he has backtracked on his initial plan to fully phase out the unpopular draft, accepting the military's proposal for a mixture of draftees and volunteer professional soldiers.

Under that plan, professional soldiers and officers would account for half the 1.1 million-strong military by the end of 2007.

Most would serve in

high-readiness units such as those serving in the Chechnya, which Ivanov said would be staffed by volunteer soldiers starting next year. The starting monthly salary for a volunteer private in Chechnya will be \$510, he said.

By comparison, a private in the 76th division earns only \$170, roughly the average monthly wage in Russia.

Clashes continue in Chechnya despite Kremlin claims that the war has ended and the Caucasus Mountains region is returning to normalcy.

On Tuesday two police officers were killed in a shootout with rebels in the capital Grozny that also left a female bystander dead, an official in the pro-Kremlin Chechen administration said.

DAIICHI
P213

A Love Story

...Some assembly required

By HANK STUEVER
THE WASHINGTON POST

It's hard to explain, but I love walking into a Radio Shack in December.

And here is what I love a little bit more: Watching people storm out of a Radio Shack in a huff.

Before the holidays are over, be sure to take time to storm out of a Radio Shack in a huff, just for the yuletide exhilaration of it. It's a tradition, and almost any Radio Shack will do: There are about 7,200 store locations nationwide, although the exact count fluctuates with the seasons. (The company proudly boasts that "an estimated 94 percent of all Americans live or work within five minutes of a Radio Shack store or dealer.")

Radio Shack and the American consumer have a comically code-pendent Christmastime relationship, defined by both affection and hot tempers. Radio Shack is a wonderful place for last-minute gifts, and also last-minute tantrums. (Tantrums about refunds, about coaxial cable, about credit checks on wireless calling plans.) Of all the chain stores you could storm out of, there is none more satisfying than a Radio Shack, which, on some level, seems fine with Radio Shack, because they know you'll come back. You also know you'll come back. It's a love story.

And I tend to love Radio Shack, in spite of anything you may read here.

Even the "Radio Shack Sucks!" Web site has a section where you can allow yourself to say something nice, and admit that Radio Shack has a sentimental place in that strip mall of your heart. I've long enjoyed lurking at www.radioshacksucks.com, filled as it is with tens of thousands of entries from miserable, whiny Radio Shack employees venting hilariously—but also cowardly, anonymously—about customers, managers, products and all manner of in-store foibles.

Radio Shack—when it is in its full holiday mode of jingling and beeping and barking and bleeping—is about Christmases that remain partly unassembled, a world of blinking things that have just stopped blinking, and low-tech baubles that still need batteries in sizes unstocked (Radio



Shack's fault) or unpurchased (your fault). Radio Shack reminds me of remote-controlled cars, which remind me of the moment Christmas feels over, because those cars frequently didn't last past Dec. 27, and thus got returned to Radio Shack, which leads us back to the storming-out-of-the-store part.

Radio Shack: The Unsharper Image.

Radio Shack: Can they interest you in a cell phone contract today?

Radio Shack: Can they get your name and address please, before you

purchase those AA batteries?

To its credit, the company suspended this data-gathering practice a few years ago; nevertheless, Radio Shack will always be loathed as the Store That Asked Too Much. This was particularly harmful to the relationship it once enjoyed with the aforementioned ham-radio crowd, who went to the Shack for parts. These were the kind of people who hated having their information entered into computers, because such a database infringed on their personal sense of freedom.

Also, the ham-radio crowd still secretly holds out hope for a dystopian "Red Dawn" event, when only those people with ham radios will be able to communicate and survive.

Radio Shack likes being the kind of place that might one day save the world. It is the hard-shelled insectoid of the offramp world—Armageddon could come and go, and Radio Shack would likely still be there.

But let's look at the sunny angle: "Radio Shack is truly an American icon—everyone knows it like an old

friend. It's not high-end and it's not a bargain-basement either. It's a true middle-American brand and we're proud of it," says a company spokeswoman, Kay Jackson, from headquarters in Fort Worth, on Christmas Eve. ("This is the retail business," she says, cheerfully. "Of course we're working today.")

The first Radio Shack opened in Boston in 1921. The chain of nine stores was bought in 1963 by Texas businessman Charles Tandy and began expanding by tens of dozens of stores.

The 1970s were very good to Radio Shack—a mention of its TRS-80 still brings a loving tear to the eye of anybody who used a personal computer before 1982 and dreamed of hacking into the nation's missile defense system—but along the way the technological future exploded and left Radio Shack in a lurch. For Radio Shack had the parts, but not the whole.

In the last 10 years, even with sales approaching \$5 billion annually, Radio Shack has made over its image in a bid to lose some of its inherent Shackiness. New corporate honchos were brought in to reposition the chain. Their television advertising now takes its cue from the outdated James Garner-Mariette Hartley trope of witty banter between two B-list celebrities who are not actually man and wife. Enter Howie Long and Teri Hatcher playfully teasing each other about remote controls, or Vanessa Williams and Ving Rhames flirting around over a digital camera.

A new mission statement was also developed: To demystify technology in every neighborhood in America.

Mission accomplished, except for the customer who always wanders in to ask "for the thing that goes with the thing," and then gets mad at the employee for not knowing anything about the thing.

But Radio Shack did indeed go boldly and admirably into all neighborhoods, onto streets where no other chain retail apparently wants to live. Radio Shack is often among the last tenants to give up on a dead shopping center, remaining even after the wig store has gone, and I like that about Radio Shack. It's a show of faith, and so is Christmas.

Groups promote recycling of tech gadgets

Entrepreneurs and environmental groups are getting ready for a surge of old computers, cell phones and other electronic devices that could be recycled or reused.

A recent tax law and new recycling requirements are expected to increase the supply of gadgets that can be given new life.

The tax break gives businesses an added 50 percent "bonus deduction" from a company's profit for equipment purchased between last May 5 and the end of next year. The deduction, in a law signed by President Bush, is on top of the 30

percent first-year write-off that many businesses take on new equipment.

Bush also signed the Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003, which directs companies on the disposal of used electronic equipment such as computers, copiers and fax machines. The National Recycling Coalition says nearly 500 million PCs will have become obsolete in the period from 1997 to 2007.

Melissa Saldana, president of American Computer Salvage in Fort Worth, is among a band of entrepreneurs hoping to take advantage of the turnover in electronics equipment. She said revenue

grew 30 percent this year.

Computer makers such as Round Rock-based Dell Inc. have stepped up programs to take back old PCs. Still, plenty of people fail to recycle, Saldana said.

"The main thing is not to throw them out," she told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "We don't want to have them go into landfills. It just irks me."

Environmentalists opposed the dumping in landfills of hazardous material such as lead in televisions and monitors, plastic and copper in circuit boards and small amounts of chromium, lead, nickel and zinc in other electronic scrap.

Salvage companies typically charge \$5 to \$10 to get rid of an old electronic device. Many of them resell relatively new equipment and send the rest to be ground up for proper disposal.

Recycling programs have failed to find new life for many of the country's old cell phones. Four national wireless recycling programs collected only 2.5 million phones from 1999 through early 2003, according to research firm Inform Inc. There are about 148 million cellular subscribers in the United States.

"Obviously, we need many more programs," Inform's Bette Fishbein told The Dallas Morning News. "They

have to be more convenient to consumers, and the consumers need to be made aware of them."

A spokesman for the cell phone industry said most cell phones don't get thrown in the trash but instead are "simply lying around collecting dust."

A network of charities, wireless companies and refurbishing firms have sprung up to collect and recycle old phones. Consumers can drop off phones at many wireless stores and charities that accept them. Some phones are cleaned and resold in Latin America or Asia, and the rest are recycled for parts. (AP)

Science & Technology

Bias keeps internet from global expansion

By ANICK JESDANUN
AP INTERNET WRITER

Rahul Dewan typed “India” into the search box of an online stock photo service, hoping to find digital images of his native country. He found only three—all of flags.

Dewan then typed “Switzerland,” a country smaller than his, and found 33, while “USA” returned 72.

His demonstration underscores a major challenge in getting the developing world online: Even with access, the Internet remains meaningless to most of the world’s population, its Web sites heavy in English and reflecting a Western tilt.

Dewan, managing director of the New Delhi software company Srijan Technologies, ultimately settled for Western faces and hands on his Web site, after failing to find Indian images he could use or a similar photo service catering to Indians.

So much for promoting his company as a homegrown business.

“They probably think this company belongs to somebody in the USA,” Dewan lamented at last week’s U.N. information technology summit. “Everything caters to the Western audience.”

People and organizations who

work on connecting villages and schools throughout the world say their efforts only begin with providing Internet access and teaching people how to use computers.

There must be compelling information, in native languages and mindful of local traditions and distinctions—such as audio and illustrations for the illiterate.

“Getting technology into people’s hands is one thing. Getting people to use it is key,” said Daniel Wagner, director of the International Literacy Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.

Much of the Web these days is built by private ventures—mostly in the West and mostly targeting where they believe the money is: the industrialized world.

As a result, there’s little specific to developing countries, which remain largely offline. According to the U.N. International Telecommunication Union, 1.5 billion villages have no access at all to phones or the Internet, and 70 percent of Internet users live in countries that make up only 16 percent of the world’s population.

Some delegates to last week’s U.N. World Summit on the Information Society complained that even when

Web sites aren’t in English, they are usually in French, Spanish or one of a handful of other languages common in the industrialized world.

Adama Samassekou, Mali’s former minister of education, said languages spoken by millions of Africans, including Mandingo and Kiswahili, are virtually nonexistent online.

With more than 95 percent of Pakistan’s literacy base in Urdu, the Internet is relevant to only the country’s elite 5 percent, said Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Pakistan’s minister of information and technology.

The solution involves more than translating English sites.

To address illiteracy, South Africa is developing speech recognition, text-to-speech and other voice technologies, starting in Zulu. An open source model will let others adapt the tools for additional languages at little cost.

Sherrin Issac, a policy director at South Africa’s Department of Science and Technology, said many existing, Western technologies are inadequate—one voice compression algorithm, for instance, drops some “clicks” in conversations, changing the meaning of words.

Bulgaria, South Korea and other countries, meanwhile, are producing

government sites in native languages. But Internet users often must type English addresses to reach them.

One Korean company, Netpia, has developed a proprietary keyword system, so a Korean typing “Yahoo” in that language would automatically get the Korean version of Yahoo Inc. Netpia executive Jason Sohn said some sites saw traffic triple after using such keywords.

The Internet’s key oversight body also is studying domain names entirely in non-English characters—instead of requiring “.com” or another English suffix.

Other challenges remain.

The Canadian government still must adapt its internal search engine to accommodate online materials in Inuktitut, the Inuit language. English and French speakers can find synonyms like “fast” and “quick” in one search, but extending that capability to Inuktitut first requires creating an electronic dictionary.

In recent months, Microsoft Corp. began a local language program to help universities and governments adapt its software to more languages. King Letsie III of Lesotho, meanwhile, is promoting open source and free software as a way to let countries adapt tools for their

domestic needs.

A desire also exists to ensure that Web sites are culturally relevant—not limited to white faces, U.S. dollars and Western values. That, for instance, could mean write-ups in support of marrying cousins, a union rejected in the industrialized world.

Jerry Kennelly, whose Irish-based photo service Stockbyte was the site Dewan had demonstrated, acknowledged that only a fifth of people featured there are non-Caucasian, reflecting marketing demands.

“We’re not in the business of running a charity,” Kennelly said. “The minute we see a justifiable demand, we will be on it like a dog out of the traps at the greyhound races.”

Until then, the task of diversifying content has largely fallen on groups like Viva Rio, which has trained residents of Brazil’s urban slums, the favelas, to write about themselves, countering the news about crime and other problems dominant in Western outlets.

“The point is to produce more content that is useful,” said Bernardo Sorj, an adviser to Viva Rio. “If people go on the Internet and do not find good content for themselves, then they go to pornography.”



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Season's Greetings: They're in the e-cards

By **DON OLDENBURG**
THE WASHINGTON POST

Here it is just before Christmas and you didn't get around to sending out holiday cards, did you? Well, send season's e-card greetings!

"Internet cards are quick and easy and a good way to buzz someone," says District of Columbia resident Antonia Balazs, 36, who began sending her Christmas e-cards to friends last week.

As a paid subscriber at American Greetings' electronic-card Web site, Balazs has unlimited access to thousands of e-cards for all occasions throughout the year. She regularly sends e-cards for birthdays and thank-you notes. And now that it's Christmastime, she's sending mostly e-cards—though her short list gets store-bought paper cards.

"A paper card requires more time and effort. It is more thoughtful," says Balazs. "Close friends and family get that thoughtfulness. Others might not. At least this way, I've followed through in some fashion."

But holiday e-cards face uphill sledding against unyielding traditions this time of year. Seems a Merry Techie Christmas isn't everyone's vision of sugarplum fairies.

According to the Washington-based Greeting Card Association, a trade group representing the \$7.5 billion industry, more than 60 percent of the 7 billion cards sold each year will be Christmas cards. A GCA survey found that 92 percent of consumers planned to purchase paper greeting cards this holiday season; 76 percent said they would send out 20 or more.

"E-cards are another avenue or



supplement, but they don't replace traditional paper cards," says GCA's executive director, Valerie Cooper. "E-cards aren't quite as special as when someone takes the time to send you an individual card."

According to Hallmark, during all of last year people sent 88 million free e-cards for various occasions from its online site—and 946,000 of those were a last-minute flurry on Christmas Eve.

"People aren't convinced they have the same desired effect," says Hallmark spokeswoman Deidre Parkes. "Seventy-three percent of people surveyed said they send holiday cards because they know how good it feels to receive them. ... That doesn't necessarily happen with e-card sending."

E-cards don't stack up against paper cards for other reasons. Some recipients have slow online computer

connections, which can make e-cards frustrating. And spam filters and virus worries are to e-cards what dogs are to postal carriers.

The biggest selling point for e-cards has been that they were free. But this year most e-card Web sites shifted to subscription services—\$10 to \$20 a year—cooling some users' interest, says Parkes. Hallmark.com still boasts a huge selection of free e-cards—including 70 free holiday e-cards, many of them animated action scenes with holiday music.

"Postage isn't getting any cheaper!" says Jean Barto, a retired Army Reserve officer in Newport News, Va., who has sent 50 paper Christmas cards this year and, just last week, a dozen or so free e-cards. But she thinks the convenience argument for e-cards is overblown.

"When I send out the online cards, it takes nearly as long to do so as to write out and address a traditional

card," says Barto.

But e-cards come in handy for people whose snail-mail addresses she can't find, she says. "There might be some people on my traditional card list that may migrate to the online list—if they fail to send me a card back this year."

But e-cards' biggest obstacle is tradition. "Americans at Christmas are very traditional. Sending paper cards is a ritual steeped in that tradition," says Tina Benavides, executive director of card planning at American Greetings Corp.

People line their mantels with them, string them across doorways and hang them on their Christmas trees. "You could do that with (printed-out) e-cards but realistically you might not want to," says Benavides, who sends e-cards mostly to her dot-com friends. "I could never send my mother an e-card. But if you know someone



who is into high-tech, then why not?"

And that's the niche approach e-card sellers are taking.

"Things are starting to really ramp up," says Sharon Schneider, senior vice president and general manager for greetings at Bluemount.com, AmericanGreetings.com and e-greetings.com—all subscriber sites owned by American Greetings.

She says e-card sender demographics skew younger, more male and edgier than traditional greeting card buyers. The most popular Christmas e-card last year at Americangreetings.com was "Santa Boogie"—a cinematic Claymation-style e-card of a rotund St. Nick rockin' out on a rooftop. On e-greetings.com, flatulence e-cards are big sellers even in the holiday season. "A lot of it truly is all about the recipient," she says. "You pick the product that meets your needs."

New gadgets for the holidays means new glut of e-waste

By **JOHN M. MORAN**
THE HARTFORD COURANT

If you're at all like me, you're hoping gadgets will be among your holiday gifts this season. And why not? Computer equipment and other electronics have been staples of holiday gift-giving for years.

So let's suppose you're lucky enough to get a new PC or cell phone or some other gadget. What are you going to do with the old stuff?

That's an increasingly important and vexing question. As our technology gets replaced, we're generating mountains of obsolete gear that needs to be disposed of.

And I do mean mountains. In the five years between 2000 and 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that as many as 250 million PCs will be junked.

Don't forget cell phones. Experts predict that new laws allowing consumers to keep their existing phone numbers when switching wireless carriers could prompt a wave of changes. Those consumers who do switch carriers are likely to switch phones, too, ditching millions of cell phones in the process.

Trouble is, much of that stuff contains hazardous materials that shouldn't just be thrown in the trash along with your food packaging and used napkins. Hazardous substances—such as lead, mercury, cadmium and barium—are common in computer equipment and other electronics.

Unfortunately, the electronics industry has only begun coming to grips with the problems created by obsolete technology. Recycling programs are few and often expensive, because there are more gadgets needing to

be recycled than there is demand for recycled parts.

Those of you who are determined to recycle—and good for you, if you are—can visit Electronics Recycling at www.electronicrecycling.net or information on where and how to dispose of old gadgets.

Tom Gaffey, the director of recycling for the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, urged residents not to throw junk electronics in with the regular refuse.

"Undoubtedly thousands of people will be buying new electronic equipment to replace older equipment over the holidays," Gaffey said. "Our message to the folks out there is to hold onto it until the next recycling."

Perhaps an even better solution is to find your stuff a new home. Identifying someone who can still

use equipment that no longer suits you has a double benefit. Not only do you avoid polluting the environment, but you give someone else a chance to enjoy technology that otherwise would go to waste.

Some nonprofit organizations have taken this approach, though their challenge is difficult. By the time some people upgrade their computer equipment, the old stuff isn't good for much.

All these alternatives, however, are Band-Aids on a festering problem. What's needed is a comprehensive, cradle-to-grave solution for technology and the hazardous substances associated with it.

Computer and electronics makers should build products that can be upgraded more easily, so consumers don't have to throw away the whole machine

when they want to improve one part of it.

The manufacturers should work to limit the amount of hazardous materials used in their products. And where those materials are essential, the hazardous parts should be arranged so that they can be easily removed by recyclers.

Government can help by promoting recycling and sponsoring collection drives that give the public a convenient way of disposing of their technology properly.

And finally, consumers have a big role to play by demanding that all the above parties contribute to a solution. Lean toward "green" technology, go the extra mile to recycle, ask your representatives when more recycling programs will be started.

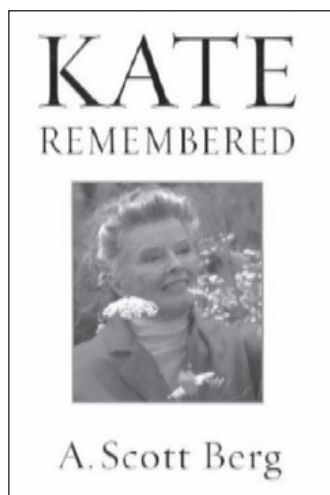
A white Christmas is fine, but when it comes to technology, let's make it a green new year.

Life & Style

The best books of 2003

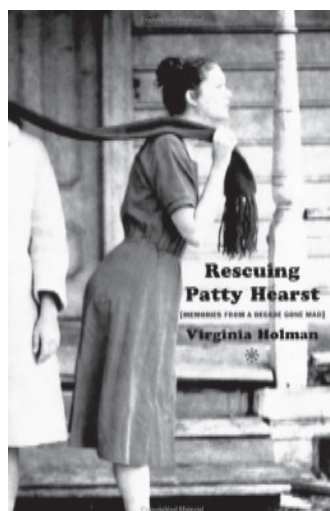
By CAROLE GOLDBERG
THE HARTFORD COURANT

So many books; so little time. For an editor whose job it is to read books, the choices are myriad, and the selection process is daunting. There were many worthy books published in 2003, but for me, these stand out.



Memoirs, those intriguing hybrids that tell real-life stories but read like novels, rated high. Among the best were:

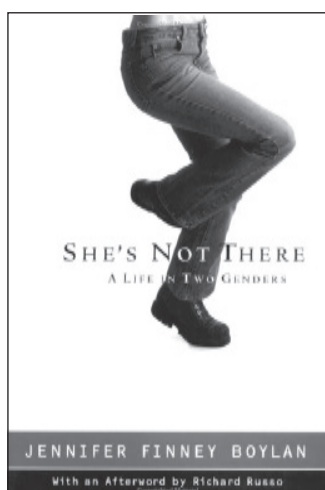
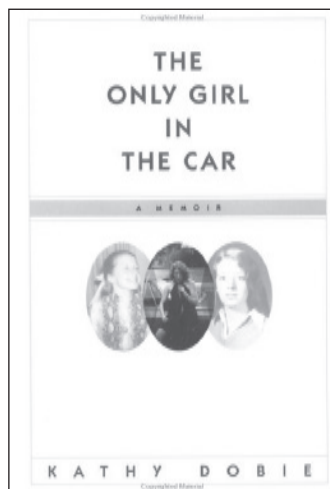
■ “Kate Remembered” by A. Scott Berg (Penguin USA, \$25.95), his affectionate reminiscence about his friendship with the incomparable Katharine Hepburn.



■ “Death in Slow Motion: My Mother’s Descent Into Alzheimer’s” by Eleanor Cooney (HarperCollins, \$23.95), an unflinchingly frank account of caring for a parent who is no longer the person you once knew. Cooney tempers the story with a loving account of her mother, Mary Durant, in her witty, talented prime.

■ Similarly, Virginia Holman gives us an unsparing yet fascinating tale of growing up with a schizophrenic mother in “Rescuing Patty Hearst: Memories From a Decade Gone Mad” (Simon & Schuster, \$23).

■ In “The Only Girl in the Car: A Memoir” (Dell, \$23.95), Kathy Dobie bravely recounts how she went from good Catholic girl to out-of-control teenager, finally regaining self-respect through writing.

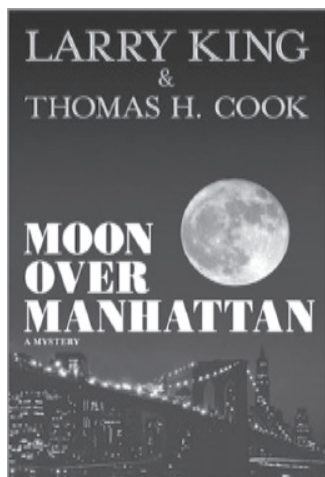


■ “She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders” (Broadway Books, \$24.95) by Jennifer Finney Boylan helps demystify the psychological pressures that drove James Boylan to become Jennifer Boylan. A thoughtful afterword by her Colby College colleague Richard Russo shows that the loved ones of a transgendered person also must undergo transformation.

My fiction favorites ranged from frothy comedies to complex family stories, with a few fantastical tales for contrast.



■ For giggles, it was hard to beat Gigi Levangie Grazer’s satirical “Maneater” (Simon & Schuster, \$21.95), whose material-girl heroine, Clarissa, makes Paris Hilton seem like Mother Teresa.



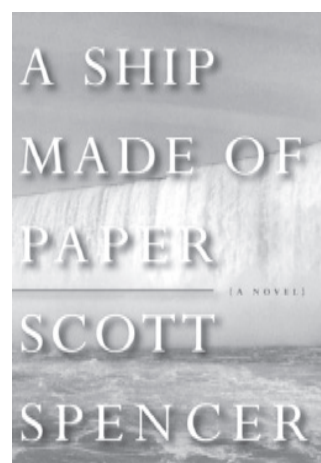
■ Equally delicious is “Moon Over Manhattan: Mystery and Mayhem” (New Millennium, \$24.95) by Larry King and Thomas H. Cook, a smooch on the cheek of the Big Apple that’s full of wacky characters with hilarious names and a plot to match.

■ Several novels explore the intertwining of women’s lives. The masterly Louise Erdrich writes about friendship, pain and the mysteries of love in “The Master Butchers Singing Club” (HarperCollins, \$25.95), a tale of German immigrants and American Indians in North Dakota.

■ Suzan-Lori Parks won a Pulitzer Prize for her playwriting. In “Getting Mother’s Body” (Random House, \$23.95), she sure-handedly spins a sometimes funny, often sad tale of a family seeking to find lost treasure and mend broken ties.



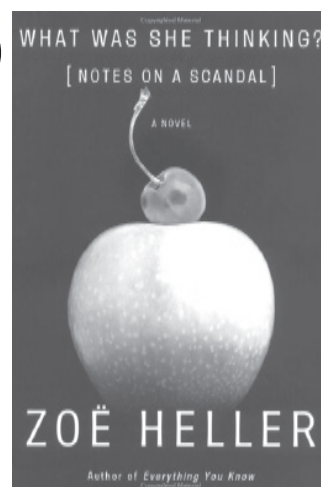
■ Toni Morrison weaves another beautiful tale of love and betrayal in “Love” (Knopf, \$23.95), a short but very complex novel in which six women’s lives are affected by one man.



■ In “A Ship Made of Paper” (Ecco/HarperCollins, \$24.95), Scott Spencer (“Endless Love”) returns to the theme of obsessive love, this time mixed with racial overtones. Few writers can express the addictive pull of an adulterous affair with Spencer’s skill.

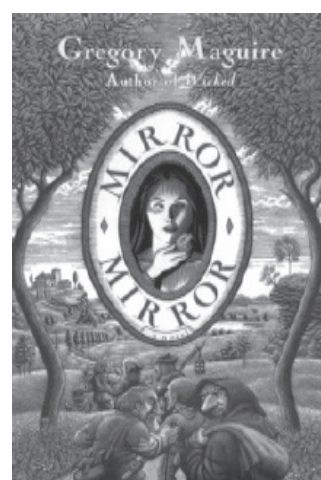
■ Zoe Heller comes close in “What Was She Thinking: Notes on a Scandal” (Holt, \$23), in which a teacher gets involved with a student and an older woman insinuates herself into the hapless teacher’s life.

Two novels were fantasies that involve innocent heroines and evil spells.



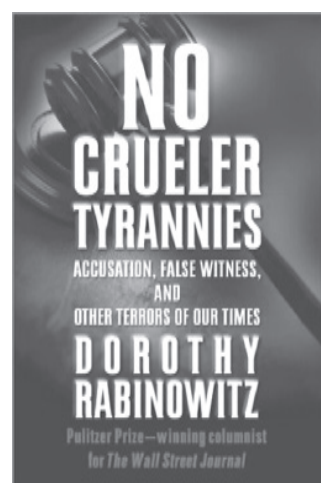
■ Gregory McGuire, whose musical “Wicked” is now on Broadway, brilliantly reworks the Snow White legend in “Mirror Mirror: A Novel” (HarperCollins, \$24.95).

■ The darkly humorous Chuck Pahlaniuk gives us a scary, offbeat story of an artist trapped in a dying resort town who is forced by a cabal of her in-laws and neighbors to produce paintings, with dire results, in “Diary” (Doubleday & Co., \$24.95).

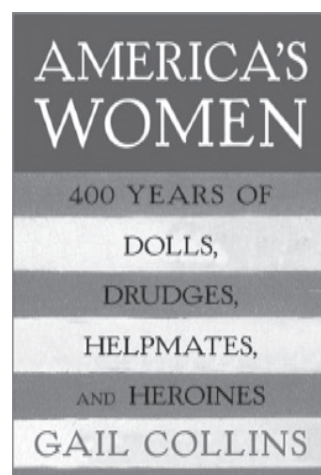


■ Also well worth picking up, according to many reviewers: “Drop City” (Viking, \$25.95) by T.C. Boyle; “The Fortress of Solitude” (Doubleday & Co., \$26) by Jonathan Lethem; and “The Known World” by Edward P. Jones (Amistad/HarperCollins, \$24.95).

■ As a reviewer, I gravitate toward fiction. But one nonfiction book that impressed me is Dorothy Rabinowitz’s “No Crueler Tyrannies: Accusation, False Witness and Other Terrors of Our Times” (Simon & Schuster, \$25). In it she recounts chilling stories of men and women convicted of molesting children in day-care, although the accusations later proved false. She excoriates the hysteria of the times, the motives of the lawyers and “experts” who induced false testimony from children and the parents who allowed their children to be used.



■ Other nonfiction of note: “America’s Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates and Heroines” (Morrow, \$27.95) by Gail Collins; “A Short History of Nearly Everything” (Broadway Books, \$27.50) by Bill Bryson; “They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America October 1967” (Simon & Schuster, \$29.95) by David Maraniss; and “Random Family: Love Drugs, Trouble and Coming of Age in the Bronx” by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc (Simon & Schuster, \$25).





Guitarist Eric Clapton holds a bouquet of flowers as he appears on stage before the premiere show of the film, "Concert for George" in Tokyo, in this Thursday, Nov. 13, 2003 file photo.

AP

Clapton, Davies get royal honors in UK

By BETH GARDINER
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LONDON (AP)—Could Queen Elizabeth II be a rock 'n roll fan? Legendary guitarist Eric Clapton and Kinks founder Ray Davies received royal honors Wednesday, becoming Commanders of the Order of the British Empire just weeks after Rolling Stone Mick Jagger picked up his knighthood at Buckingham Palace.

Also among the luminaries singled out for awards in the annual New Year's Honors list were World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, who became a knight, and tennis star Tim Henman, made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, or OBE.

This year's honors have been the subject of more than the usual amount of debate.

Responding to criticism that the selection process was too secretive and tainted by politics and public relations, the government announced it would review the system to make it more open and independent.

One leaked document said Henman, a four-time Wimbledon semifinalist whose failure to win the tournament has bitterly disappointed Britons, was being recommended for an OBE to "add interest" to the list.

A prominent scientist, Colin Blake-more, complained publicly about reports that he was denied a knighthood because he is a vocal proponent of research on animals. He did not get an award.

Though the honors are bestowed by the queen, she chooses only a few. Most recipients are selected by committees of civil servants from nominations made by the government and the public.

But Britons are divided over the importance of the awards—Keith Richards criticized his bandmate Jagger for accepting the knighthood, saying he shouldn't have associated himself with such a symbol of the establishment.

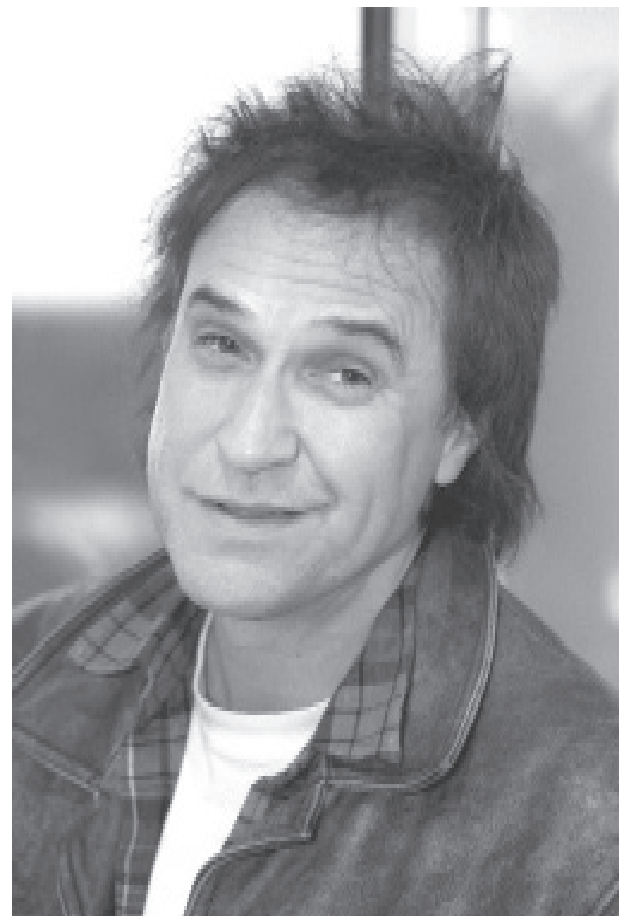
And The Sunday Times published a list of 300 well-known people—including singer David Bowie, comedian John Cleese and actors Albert Finney and Kenneth Branagh—who had declined honors since 1945.

Clapton, 58, a member of the 1960s R&B band the Yardbirds and a founder of the rock trio Cream, has won more than 15 Grammy awards and gained greatest renown for his solo career, with songs like "Layla," "After Midnight" and "Tears in Heaven."

Davies, 59, founded the Kinks with his brother Dave. Their hard-edged, guitar-driven music drew a huge following in the '60s and beyond with hits like "You Really Got Me," "All Day and All of the Night" and "Lola."

Physicist Berners-Lee, now at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is credited with making the Internet accessible to millions by inventing the Web system of servers and browsers which he distributed free.

Among the 981 people receiving honors: 37 players and coaches from England's national rugby team, which won



this year's World Cup. Lesser-known names also were singled out for awards, sometimes for quirky pursuits.

Andy Hine, chairman of the Roller Coaster Club of Great Britain, was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire, or MBE, for services to tourism.

Animal behavior expert Bruce Fogle, co-founder of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, also got an MBE, as did Anne Patrizio, an Edinburgh, Scotland, teacher who has campaigned for the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

MBEs also went to a milkman, a school handyman and a former crossing guard.

Author and historian Harold Evans, whose book "The American Century," was a best seller, was made a knight. He is a former editor of The Times and The Sunday Times in Britain and served as vice chairman and editorial director of the New York Daily News and U.S. News and World Report magazine.

Former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson received a knighthood.

Actress Joan Plowright, wife of the late Laurence Olivier, was made a dame, the female equivalent of a knight. So was Rabbi Julia Neuberger, a broadcaster, author and health care charity chief.

Commander of the Order of the British Empire, or CBE, awards went to "Billy Elliot" director Stephen Daldry and to Philip Pullman, author of the children's fantasy trilogy "His Dark Materials." Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman Godric Smith also got a CBE, as did cartoonist Ronald Searle, 83.

Actress Virginia McKenna, whose role in the African lion saga "Born Free," led to a career in wildlife conservation, received an OBE. An OBE also went to craggy-faced actor Pete Postlethwaite, nominated for an Oscar for 1993's "In the Name of the Father."

AP
March 12, 1998
file photo of Ray
Davies frontman
of British rock
group The Kinks.

OBIT

Sheriff to respond to Jackson abuse claim

Finally, it's OK to speak Elvish in public

By **MARY MCNAMARA**
Los Angeles Times

It hasn't always been this easy to be a Tolkien fan.

For most of my young-adult and adult life, people tended to look at me sidelong should I happen to mention that I had read "The Lord of the Rings" several times — OK, pretty much once a year since I got my first copies when I was in the fifth grade. Boyfriends especially would grow suddenly still, their eyes wildly scanning the walls for the nearest exit should I suddenly whip out my faux hobbit feet or start speaking in Elvish.

To the uninformed, Tolkien fans occupied the vaguely sinister and decidedly weird regions shared by Dungeons & Dragons players, members of creative anachronistic societies and women who collected flower fairies and unicorn figurines.

Science fiction was a more acceptable obsession: It was masculine, based on science and reason. There were rocket ships and time continuums, things that were possible. Fantasy, on the other had, was just out to lunch. Elves and wizards were girly, hobbits and dwarfs were fey.

It was useless to protest that "The Lord of the Rings" was an epic masterpiece in an age-old scholarly and literary tradition, useless to point out its roots in myth and language. At best, the trilogy was associated with the drug culture of the '60s, granted a certain camp credibility like tie-dye and bongos. But for most nonfans, it was considered a big waste of reading time.

Now, of course, all that has changed. Now Viggo Mortenson is on the cover of Vanity Fair for playing Aragorn, son of Arathorn, heir of Isildur, last king of Gondor — and nobody thinks he's fey or girly. Now teenage girls in Hello Kitty T-shirts swoon over magazine stories about Orlando Bloom. "Legolas is my favorite," one sighed at a checkout counter in Target. "I like him even better than Frodo."

Watching her, all I could think of was how at her age I would have said the word "Legolas" and risked eternal social alienation.

But Peter Jackson and his crew have made literally millions of people conversant in the ways of Middle-earth. Galadriel, Gimli, Saruman, Theoden, Eowyn, Samwise, Treebeard — not four years ago you took your chances when uttering these names in public. Sure, you might find a fellow fan amid the blank looks,

but you'd have to take your business outside the pale — the park at midnight, certain bars and dark-curtained rooms.

Now, every Tolkien fan I know has come out of the closet, proudly displaying their long-concealed obsession if only to help first-timers understand Jackson's work. (Dwarfs and elves have a long-standing animosity, that's why Gimli is so mean to Legolas at first; no, hobbits are not immortal, though they live longer than we do; Faramir is Boromir's brother and their father is steward, not king, of Gondor.)

Now we can talk about the characters we have loved for so long without people looking at us as if we were about to break out in Entish song. This turn of events is both liberating and unsettling. Yes, any armchair shrink will tell you that secrets beget shame, but in some cases they can engender a feeling of specialness, even superiority. Finding another Tolkien fan always guaranteed hours of conversation, made even more delicious by the knowledge that most people within earshot didn't know what the heck we were talking about.

As any member of any disenfranchised group will tell you, it's pretty strange when the mainstream starts speaking your language.

Or actually, not quite. As awesome a work as Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" is, it remains, as he has said since the beginning, exactly that: Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings," not Tolkien's. So it's hard sometimes not to interrupt a movie fan's rhapsodies with bits of crucial background (one reason Denethor disliked Faramir was because of Faramir's admiration for Gandalf) or to point out the (many) places in which the film diverges from the books.

This is no doubt annoying to those who are more than satisfied with Jackson's vision and have no desire to mull the possibility of other choices. They look at us long-standing Tolkien fans with smiles half irritated, half sympathetic. But like people who wore Burberry before it got hot again, we need to stake our claim, to make sure that people know we appreciated the greatness of the work way before New Line even existed.

It's not that we're obsessive, it's just if you're going to talk about it, you should know. ...

One friend who asked a few questions about certain characters gave me a queer look when I finished answering. "Well, thanks," he said. "I get it now. And by the way, you need professional help."

Jackson interview on CBS tops ratings

NEW YORK (AP)—With Ed Bradley's Michael Jackson interview on Sunday, "60 Minutes" returned to a place it once found familiar - first place in the TV ratings.

Some 18.8 million people watched Jackson defend himself against molestation charges, according to Nielsen Media Research.

That wasn't a blockbuster; Jackson's interview with British journalist Martin Bashir drew 27 million on ABC last February. TV viewership overall was down during a holiday week and viewers may be suffering from Jackson fatigue.

But it was enough to make it the most-watched show of the week. Only Brett Favre's TD-throwing spree against the Oakland Raiders on "Monday Night Football" was close.

The venerable news-magazine has spent whole seasons as TV's most popular show. But it hadn't been TV's most-watched show during any week of the TV season since November 1998.

"60 Minutes" generally has one of the oldest audiences on television, and the Jackson interview drew the newsmagazine's best ratings among viewers aged 18-to-49 in nearly four years.

The show has been undergoing a renaissance in founding executive producer Don Hewitt's final year at the helm. Its viewership is up 14 percent over last year and the show has spent five of the past six weeks in Nielsen's top 10.

It enabled CBS to continue its dominance of the TV season, averaging 9.7 million viewers (6.2 rating, 11 share). Helped by

football and its "Dreamkeeper" miniseries, ABC finished second with 8.1 million viewers (5.1, 9) and won for the first time this season among the 18-to-49 demographic that advertisers love.

NBC averaged 7.3 million viewers (4.7, 9), Fox had 6 million (3.7, 7), the WB 2.7 million (1.8, 3), UPN 2.6 million (1.0, 3) and Pax TV 930,000 (0.6, 1).

NBC's "Nightly News" won the evening news ratings race, averaging 11.2 million viewers (7.3 rating, 14 share). ABC's "World News Tonight" had 9.9 million (6.8, 13) and the "CBS Evening News" had 7.9 million (5.2, 10).

A ratings point represents 1,084,000 households, or 1 percent of the nation's estimated 108.4 million TV homes. The share is the percentage of in-use televisions tuned to a given show.

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP)—Jail officials are promising to detail how they handled Michael Jackson when the pop star was arrested last month on child molestation charges.

Jackson alleges he was roughly treated and left with a bruised arm and dislocated shoulder. The Sheriff's Department previously said Jackson "was treated with courtesy and professionalism throughout the arrest and booking process."

"Some of the points will be addressed a little more specifically" during a news conference Wednesday with Santa Barbara County Sheriff Jim Anderson, a jail spokesman said Tuesday.

Jackson, 45, is charged with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts on a child under 14 and two counts

of administering an intoxicating agent, reportedly wine.

Meanwhile, all warrants and affidavits in the case will be sealed under an agreement reached by prosecutors and Jackson's defense team. The court order said the documents should remain sealed until the scheduled Jan. 16 arraignment.

In a CBS "60 Minutes" interview broadcast Sunday, Jackson said he was "manhandled" after he surrendered Nov. 20.

"My shoulder is dislocated, literally. It's hurting very badly. I'm in pain all the time," Jackson said. "It's very swollen. ... It keeps me from sleeping at night."

He displayed what he said

was a bruise on his right arm from the treatment, and said his shoulder was dislocated, although news videos showed him waving to fans after leaving the jail.

Jackson said he was locked in a restroom for 45 minutes after he asked to use the facilities. He said the room was smelly because of feces thrown all over.

Jackson has not filed a formal complaint.

Chief Deputy Fred Olguin, who oversees the jail and was present at Jackson's booking, denied the singer was mistreated, the Santa Barbara News-Press reported Tuesday.

"I don't run my jail that way, and I take a lot of pride in how



Jackson

OBIT

WALLACE

Spears, Aguilera trading insults

NEW YORK (AP)—Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera aren't exactly in the same Mickey Mouse Club anymore.

The pop stars, who both kissed Madonna a few months ago during a performance at the MTV Video Music Awards, are now trading insults about each other's careers and personalities.

In the December issue of Blender magazine, Aguilera said of Spears, "She seemed very distant, even during rehearsals. Every time I tried to start a conversation with her—well, let's just say she seemed nervous the whole time. ... She seems to me like a lost little girl, someone who desperately needs guidance."

Spears responds in the magazine's January issue, "I can't believe Christina said that about me."

Then she relates a story about seeing Aguilera, her former friend and fellow Mouseketeer, for the first time in two



AP
Britney Spears, left, Madonna, center, and Christina Aguilera perform during the MTV Video Music Awards at New York's Radio City Music Hall in this Aug. 28, 2003 file photo.

years: "She comes up to me in a club in front of all these people and tries to put her tongue down my throat!

"I say, 'It's good to see you,' and she goes, 'Well, you're not being real with me.' I was like, 'Well, Christina, what's your

definition of real? Going up to girls and kissing them after you haven't seen them for two years?'"

Oscar nomination ballots mailed

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—Oscar nomination ballots are in the mail.

They were sent Monday to 5,803 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Completed nomination ballots for the 76th Academy Awards

must be returned to the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers by 5 p.m. Jan. 17. Any ballot received after the deadline is ineligible.

Oscar nominations will be announced Jan. 27. The Academy Awards will be presented Feb. 29.

In 2000, ballots for California academy members got lost

in the mail. The academy had to invalidate them, send out new ones and extend the voting deadline by two days. The missing ballots eventually turned up at a postal facility in a Los Angeles suburb, where they had been mistakenly mixed in with bulk mail shipments.

Jolie visits Sudanese refugees in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—Hollywood star Angelina Jolie visited a Sudanese refugee camp on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital Monday, distributing winter clothes, blankets and toys.

The Oscar-winning actress, who was in Egypt as a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, toured the Kilo Arbaa We Nus camp outside Cairo with Egyptian film star and fellow goodwill ambassador Adel Imam, the UNHCR said in a statement.

Jolie also donated US\$20,000 to build a community health center in the crowded camp, which houses tens of thousands of African refugees, mostly from war-torn Sudan, the statement said.

Jolie spoke about the importance of improving living standards at refugee camps, saying that refugees "are not just beneficiaries of assistance, but, if given the chance, they are also contributing members of the host society," the statement said.

According to official estimates from 2001, roughly 200 Sudanese arrive in Cairo each week, streaming easily over their country's shared border with Egypt. Many hope to secure temporary asylum in Egypt before resettling in the West, while many others stay on illegally, facing hard living conditions in already overpopulated Egypt and few job



American actress Angelina Jolie poses at the Dorchester Hotel in London, in this Oct. 10, 2003 file photo.

prospects. Some turn to prostitution or drug dealing.

Jolie, a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. refugee agency since 2001, won a support-

ing-actress Oscar for 1999's "Girl, Interrupted." Her movies also include the "Lara Croft" films and the recently released "Beyond Borders."

'Spice' husband wants to add to marriage makes wife sick

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: "Burt" and I have been married 14 years. We have two beautiful children—a boy and a girl—ages 8 and 11. Burt works in sales. I am a designer and run my business out of our home, so that I can be here when the children come home from school.

For the last couple of years, Burt has complained that the "spice" has gone out of our marriage. He did some Internet research and found a swingers group in our community. At first, he only did some chatting online, but now he wants us to go to one of their parties. I told him I'm against it, but he insists. The idea of exposing myself to strangers is mortifying. But the more I tell him no, the more insistent he becomes.

Should I agree to it to save our marriage?

WAVERING IN VIRGINIA

DEAR WAVERING: No. If you do, the dynamics of your marriage will change forever—and not for the better.

Great sex is all about great communication. If a dish isn't spicy enough, I see nothing to be gained by diluting it. To do something that makes you uncomfortable or is morally repugnant will not only not save your marriage, it could also be the straw that breaks the camel's back. A healthier solution for what ails your marriage would be to consult a sex therapist or a marriage counselor.

DEAR ABBY: My husband has Parkinson's disease with dementia. I have good friends who ask me to coffee or lunch to get me out of the house, but what I'd really like is if they'd ask my HUSBAND out to coffee or lunch.

Every hour I'm away, I worry about him. Plus, I have not been by myself in this house for eight years.

Please pass on a message to your readers. If you really want to help, offer to take out the ill person, and give the caregiver some quiet time.

NEEDING A BREAK

DEAR NEEDING: To expect someone not trained in caring for a patient with dementia to take the person out into unfamiliar surroundings is asking a lot. It may be too much responsibility for your friends to assume.

A better solution would be to arrange for respite care for your husband. You could have your quiet time, or time alone in the house, by asking your husband's doctor which senior centers in your vicinity are equipped to provide safe activities for him on a regular basis. Either that, or contact Faith in Action at www.FaithinAction.org or (877) 324-8411. It's a national program that helps establish community programs providing volunteer care to neighbors with long-term health needs.

DEAR ABBY: I just returned from visiting my 26-year-old daughter, her 27-year-old live-in fiancé and their 4-month-old twins. They live in Kansas, where they own their home, and both have good jobs.

During dinner Saturday night, my daughter asked me if I plan to pay for their wedding next June. Am I obligated to help them financially?

THEY LIVE IN KANSAS

DEAR KANSAS: No, you are not. A wedding is a gift from the parent or parents. It is not, and should not be considered an obligation. Your daughter and her fiancé are self-supporting and can pay for their own wedding. If you wish to contribute money toward their wedding, it would be a generous gift. But under no circumstances should you feel put on the spot to do so.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Epstein

Theo Epstein, Gammons' band to perform on CD

BOSTON (AP)—ESPN's Peter Gammons and Boston Red Sox general manager Theo Epstein are lending their musical talents to a charity CD, featuring Pearl Jam, Paul Westerberg and the Allman Brothers Band.

Gammons will host the fourth annual "Hot Stove, Cool Music" concert on Jan. 11 to coincide with the release of the CD, which also includes donated tracks from Dropkick Murphys, Letters to Cleo's Kay Hanley and Little Feat. The disc goes on sale to the public Jan. 20.

Proceeds from the CD and the concert at the Paradise in Boston will benefit the official charity of the Red Sox, the Jimmy Fund, which supports research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Several Red Sox players will join Gammons and Epstein's band, Trauser, at the concert. Also performing will be Buffalo Tom's Bill Janovitz and Hanley, along with others.

Pastimes



EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	G
New Jersey	39	25	.609	-
Philadelphia	37	26	.587	1 1/2
Boston	37	27	.578	2
Orlando	33	33	.500	7
Washington	31	33	.484	8
New York	28	36	.438	11
Miami	21	43	.328	18

Central Division

Detroit	40	23	.635	-
Indiana	38	27	.585	3
New Orleans	37	29	.561	4 1/2
Milwaukee	32	33	.492	9
Atlanta	26	39	.400	15
Chicago	23	43	.348	18 1/2
Toronto	20	42	.323	19 1/2
Cleveland	11	53	.172	29 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Dallas	48	15	.762	-
San Antonio	45	18	.714	3
Minnesota	42	25	.627	8
Utah	37	27	.578	11 1/2
Houston	33	30	.524	15
Memphis	23	41	.359	25 1/2
Denver	14	51	.215	35

Pacific Division

Sacramento	45	19	.703	-
Portland	42	22	.656	3
L.A. Lakers	35	28	.556	9 1/2

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L
New Jersey	31	14
Boston	26	19
Philadelphia	24	22
Orlando	24	23
Washington	22	24
New York	19	25
Miami	16	2 9

Central Division

Indiana	33	13
Detroit	29	15
New Orleans	24	22
Milwaukee	22	22
Chicago	17	28
Atlanta	17	29
Toronto	11	34
Cleveland	9	37

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Dallas	35	9
San Antonio	29	16
Minnesota	27	18
Utah	27	18
Houston	24	20
Memphis	13	31
Denver	10	35

Pacific Division

Sacramento	32	14
Portland	28	16
Phoenix	26	21
L.A. Lakers	20	23
Seattle	20	23
Golden State	20	24
L.A. Clippers	17	28

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Orlando	2	0
New Jersey	1	0
Philadelphia	1	1
Boston	0	1
Miami	0	1
New York	0	1
Washington	0	1

Central Division

Chicago	1	0
Detroit	1	0
Indiana	1	0
Toronto	1	0
New Orleans	0	0
Atlanta	0	1
Cleveland	0	1
Milwaukee	0	1

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Dallas	1	0
Minnesota	1	0
San Antonio	1	0
Utah	0	0
Denver	0	1
Houston	0	1
Memphis	0	1

Pacific Division

Sacramento	1	0
Portland	1	0
Golden State	0	0
L.A. Clippers	0	0
Phoenix	0	0
Seattle	0	0
L.A. Lakers	0	2

Wednesday's Games

Chicago 99, Boston 96
Indiana 91, Houston 82
Toronto 74, Washington 68
Philadelphia 95, Milwaukee 93
Orlando 100, Miami 86
New Jersey 105, Atlanta 94
Dallas 119, Memphis 108
Minnesota 83, Denver 77
Detroit 86, New York 77
Portland 102, L.A. Lakers 90

Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Giants	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	-	3	
Hustlers	1	0	1	4	2	0	5	-	13	



SPORTS BRIEFS



Spurs defeat Mavericks, 111-104

Tony Parker scored a career-high 32 points, including seven free throws in the final minute, to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 111-104 win over the division rival Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Yearend RGA champion tourney tomorrow

The Refaluwasch Golf Association will hold their yearend Club Champion Tournament tomorrow, December 14, at the Lao Lao West golf course.

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